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# THE HISTORY OF TOM RIGBY.

In THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

# THE HISTORY OF TOM RIGBY.

## BOOK I.

ON the weſtern border of Northamptonſhire, and on one of the moſt beautiful ſpots of riſing land throughout the county, is ſituated the elegant manſion of the Earl of L—.

It was firſt erected by his grandfather; altered and improved at prodigious expence by his father; and dignified by the reſidence of every polite virtue in the ſon and his amiable family.

But, gentle reader, notwithſtanding the lively pleaſure you would receive in reading the memoirs of this illuſtrious houſe, entering into the ſentiments and converſations of people of ſuch diſtinguiſhed quality, and being alſo acquainted with the intereſting movements of love in high life, it is not the preſumptuous intention of theſe pages to attempt ſo exquiſite a gratification for you. To much more humble ſcenes will you be led, if not determined to return this volume, without reading it, to the ſhelf of oblivion—or to the circulating library, which can furniſh you with an hundred in its ſtead, full of ſplendor and affluence, pomp and parade.

Mr. John Wilkins occupied a neat farm houſe, at about two miles from the Earl's ſeat, which, as it happened to lie in the way, could not be paſſed without ſome ſhort notice of it. He was not entirely a tenant of his Lordſhip's, for he alſo held ſome lands too of a neighbouring 'Squire;

beſides

beſides enjoying a little freehold of his own, on which his houſe ſtood, the ſmall inheritance bequeathed him by his father.

He had been five years in poſſeſſion of it, having lived ſingle till his eight and twentieth year, the period of his life at which this hiſtory commences.—When calling in one day upon the widow Rigby, as he was paſſing by her houſe, he was ſmitten to the heart by a pair of lovely eyes, which belonged to a modeſt, decent young creature who was there on a viſit. If he was ſtruck with the agreeable perſon of the fair Alice Jetcombe, for ſo was ſhe called, he was yet more engaged by the ſenſible freedom of her converſation. He ſtaid with the widow three hours longer than he intended, and went away fully convinced that he could not live alone any longer with the leaſt convenience or happineſs. He went away, I ſay,—for his modeſty prevented him making ſuch enquiries at that time, as might have afford-

ed him the pleaſing opportunity of eſcorting the young Lady home.

No ſooner did he quit the houſe, than he began to revolve in his mind the diſagreeable way of life he had been in for five years paſt. For though he had an agreeable acquaintance among his neighbours, yet there was always a ſomething wanting at home; where, being rather of a ſober turn, the chief part of his time was ſpent. Now the imagination of having ſuch an agreeable young woman as Alice was, for a conſtant companion, had ſo occupied his mind, that he determined to viſit his good friend the widow again the next day, and get particular information concerning her.

The next morning, he devoted the firſt hour that he could ſpare to this purpoſe. Mrs. Rigby gave him to underſtand, that the young Lady was the daughter of a clergyman that was dead, and had left her with a worthy, prudent mother and but a very

very ſlender ſubſiſtence. That on her mother's death, about three years ago, ſhe had got a recommendation to the family of the Earl of L—, as an attendant on his eldeſt daughter;—but being obliged to ſpend the winter in London, which either from its air or its irrgularities did not agree with her health; ſhe relinquiſhed this ſtation, and was received into the family of 'Squire Turnbull, to wait on his Lady.—This account was very pleaſing to Mr. Wilkins; only he had no very good opinion of Mr. Turnbull's morals, and had ſome fears which he could hardly venture to ſuggeſt to Mrs. Rigby, but which ſhe prevented, by praiſing the recluſe and confined ſituation in which Alice lived with her Lady. Indeed her principles, as well as a conſtant attendance on Mrs. Turnbull, contributed to preſerve her from the attacks of the 'Squire; who, at forty years of age, had very ſtrong affections towards every handſome young woman in the pariſh.

It was a favourable circumſtance to the farmer, that the girl on whom he had fixed his firſt affections, was tolerably well qualified to make him a uſeful wife, and had beſides, about two hundred pounds left her by her mother, who had taken the utmoſt pains to qualify her for ſuch ſtation as her circumſtances would probably bring her into. Theſe latter particulars were very acceptable to Wilkins: and the ſmallneſs of her fortune did not in the leaſt affect him, or raiſe any prudential ſcruple in him.

This inſenſibility to things of the firſt importance to others, proceeded from a ſingularity in his temper. Though he was a judicious and prudent man in the management of his buſineſs, yet he had an unuſual indifference about money, that few farmers ever had before him, and perhaps none ſince: and was accuſtomed to look no farther into futurity than was conſiſtent

tent with a peaceable enjoyment of the preſent neceſſaries of life.

This peculiar turn of mind might probably be owing to his diſpoſition in other reſpects: for as he had a greater fondneſs for books than is uſual among farmers; he had, in the many leiſure hours of his occupation, cultivated an acquaintance with ſeveral of the ſciences; was of a philoſophical turn of mind; and among his other ſtudies had actually read the Bible twice through: from which ſome of our readers might conclude him a methodiſt, if we did not aſſure them to the contrary.

Having received from Mrs. Rigby all the information he wanted, he returned home, his heart elated with pleaſing imaginations; and he reſolved to improve the firſt opportunity of getting to the ſpeech of Alice Jetcombe, and offer her his hand and heart.

Mrs. Turnbull being on a viſit ſome miles diſtant from home, had given Alice the enjoyment of an afternoon in her own way. She determined therefore to ſpend it with the widow Rigby, and was on her way thither, when farmer Wilkins met her, as he was going very reſolutely to the 'Squire's houſe, on purpoſe to introduce himſelf, if poſſible, to the fair object of his affection. This unexpected meeting, at ſo critical a time, at firſt diſconcerted Mr. Wilkins not a little: he could not now go forward to the 'Squire; and yet his modeſty wanted a favourable excuſe to turn back and accompany his miſtreſs. At the inſtant of deliberation, a friendly bull in the adjoining field, whether ſeized with ſympathetic compaſſion for the farmer's caſe, or perplexed, perhaps, himſelf, with ſome of thoſe vexatious obſtacles that cruelly retard the happineſs of lovers, preſented himſelf on the ſummit of a bank; and roaring hideouſly, was aiming

ing to make his paſſage over a ditch before him. As Alice was not wholly free from ſome of the leſs unreaſonable fears of her ſex, ſhe readily ſought Mr. Wilkins's protection; who with the utmoſt chearfulneſs accompanied her through two fields on her way; aſſuring her it would hardly be ſafe for her to go alone. She made many apologies to him for taking him ſo much out of his way, and preſſed him to return, as ſhe was out of danger: but at the ſame time ſhewed a tender regard for his ſafety as well as her own, by perſuading him to take a different road back. He had no fear but of being obliged to quit her company, and having learned where ſhe was going, inſiſted on attending her the other half mile for fear of accidents. It was a favourable ſeaſon: yet it was with ſome heſitation that he began to open his heart to the liſtening confuſed maid, who, at firſt, thought it only the effects of common gallantry. But ſhe ſoon underſtood

by the propoſals Mr. Wilkins made, and the ſerioufneſs of his addreſs, that he had plain downright intentions of marrying her if ſhe would have him. Theſe were far from being diſagreeable to Alice, who knew ſomething of the farmer's reputation, as a ſenſible, generous, and thriving man, and ſaw in him a very agreeable figure. But it was neceſſary even for honeſt virtue to be reſerved at the firſt onſet.

"I wonder greatly Mr. Wilkins, that "ſuch a thought could ever enter your "head;—you muſt think I ſhould make "but a poor wife in a farm houſe: and "ſurely you cannot be in earneſt." He ſaid all he could to aſſure her he was; and that he had no doubt of rendering ſuch a ſtation very agreeable to her, if ſhe would condeſcend to accept of it.

In ſhort, Alice in an oblique manner removed her own objections, by acknowledging that ſhe had indeed ſpent ſome few years of her life in a dairy, as her father

father managed a little farm of his own, and ſhe was the ſuperintendant of all the buſineſs within doors till his death.

This intereſting converſation brought them very ſoon within ſight of the widow's houſe: and the farmer had gained confidence enough to propoſe joining with his fair companion in her viſit; as he was well acquainted with Mrs. Rigby. But Alice begged of him to return, and by no means hinder, on her account, the buſineſs he was going on, when they firſt met. He aſſured her that, ſo far from hindering it, he was willing to hope that the enjoyment of her company would rather effectually promote it, for he was going on no other buſineſs than this which he had juſt mentioned to her.

Mrs. Rigby, with a very chearful air, congratulated herſelf on the pleaſure of this viſit from two of her beſt neighbours; and ſetting a cup of ale on the table, while Sally prepared the tea-things, ſhe

began to divert them with ſeveral entertaining ſtories of the lovely little boy, who ſtood pratling between the farmer's knees. But we will not affront our readers with the repetition of them, for though the partiality of a fond mother may be excuſed in relating ſuch particulars, and do it with a good grace, before her ſelect friends; yet the entertainment depends on the friendſhip of the parties, and on many accidental circumſtances. And it is not to be expected that the reader ſhould have felt a friendſhip for the humble heroes and heroines of this hiſtory, on ſo ſhort an acquaintance.

Take hence a ſober hint, ye fond ſelf-admiring mothers who are addicted to this folly—and who render but an ill compliment to yourſelves, or to your children, when you expreſs ſomething like wonder at finding them to be rational creatures.

Farmer Wilkins and his fair companion having chattered away two or three hours

with

with the widow, Alice made a motion to go homewards; as it would be very ill taken by her miſtreſs to find her from home at her return. Mr. Wilkins propoſed to accompany her, with a ready civility; which after ſome excuſes, was accepted. And at parting the widow bade her farewel, with a very ſignificant nod, and a ſmile that imported many good wiſhes.

It will not anſwer our purpoſe to relate the converſation that paſſed there; but it ended with as much encouragement to renew a correſpondence on the ſame ſubject, as the farmer could expect from a young woman of real virtue and modeſty; and he parted from her at the end of the 'Squire's orchard with very pleaſing impreſſions on his heart. They managed their future interviews, which were not unfrequent, with ſo much privacy, that it was no ſmall aſtoniſhment to Alice when her miſtreſs, one day, as ſhe was adjuſting her head-

head-dreſs, ſpoke to her in this manner:
"So, Alice—I find you demure young
"women, are as well diſpoſed for a huſ-
"band as the giddy girls that make no
"ſcruple of owning it—What! I ſuppoſe
"you got ſomebody to ſpeak for you to
"farmer Wilkins—Well, he's a comely
"young fellow, and you will make the
"handſomeſt couple, no doubt, in all
"Northamptonſhire."

It was ſome time before poor Alice recovered from her ſurpriſe at this diſcovery, or got the better of the indignation which one part of her miſtreſs's ſpeech had raiſed in her gentle boſom:—but, recollecting herſelf, ſhe replied, "I am very
"much concerned, Madam, that you have
"ſo mean an opinion of me, as to think I
"ſhould make offers of myſelf to any man
"living: I am ſure you have never ſeen
"any ſuch forward behaviour in me: and
"I hope will never have room to reproach
"me with any thing like it. But it will be

"very

" very improper for me to ſuppoſe that my " continuance with you can be any longer " agreeable." " Well, child," replied the Lady, " I ſee your meaning pretty " plainly—You are to be married, I ſup- " poſe, in a month, and are willing to give " me warning in good time—If you had " not been a mighty ſelf-ſufficient girl, you " might at leaſt, I think, have conſulted " with your friends about this match, be- " fore you ventured to determine for your- " ſelf."——Poor Alice could not refrain from a few tears; ſome, devoted to the honourable remembrance of the real friends ſhe once had, in her fond and prudent parents; ſome occaſioned by the reproach- ful inſinuations juſt uttered; and others were owing to the intruſion of pain on a mind that had lately been much in- dulged in the ideas of pleaſure. Having wiped away her tears, ſhe replied to what her Lady had ſaid, in terms of meekneſs and reſpect, " I ſhould have thought it ra-

" ther

" ther impertinent, Madam, to have trou-
" bled you with any mention of my affairs.
" But if I could have imagined you would
" have condeſcended to take any notice of
" them, I ſhould have been very happy
" to have obtained your advice and ap-
" probation: and if you know any thing
" now of Mr. Wilkins, Madam, that ought
" to prevent my giving countenance to
" him, I ſhall think myſelf honoured if you
" will pleaſe to inform me of it."

" No, no child, I know nothing bad of
" the farmer—he is a very honeſt, good
" man I believe: and if he thinks well of you
" for his dairy—well and good—I have no
" objection." The air with which this was ſpoken ſerved to prevent any reply from the trembling Alice. Her miſtreſs added, " ſhe ſuppoſed it was her intention to marry
" ſoon, and would therefore provide her-
" ſelf within the month if ſhe could." To which Alice ſubmitted in humble ſilence.

It

It will not be a difficult matter to explain the real cauſe of this unreaſonable diſpleaſure of Mrs. Turnbull's towards her maid. It was not that ſhe had any diſapprobation of her for a ſervant: but it was mortifying to compare her face with that of Alice every day in the ſame glaſs: and her vexation and envy were not likely to abate, on finding that a dependent of hers had preſumed to think and act for herſelf in a buſineſs that concerned her own happineſs and eſtabliſhment in life.

However, the next day, Alice, very unexpectedly, met with almoſt a ſmile of complacence from her miſtreſs, when ſhe came to aſk her permiſſion to go as far as Mrs. Rigby's in the afternoon; which ſhe readily granted: and to account for this extraordinary change, the reader need only be informed, that Mrs. Turnbull had formerly no ſmall jealouſy of her huſband, on account of her fair attendant, which had lately almoſt been forgotten by the perfect indifference

indifference he had always apparently maintained, but which was really owing to the care Alice took to ſhun him upon every occaſion. The night of the day in which the foregoing converſation happened, Mrs. Turnbull, at ſupper, mentioned the circumſtance of Alice's intended marriage with an air of triumph; but her joy at removing a dreaded rival, as ſhe imagined, did not prevent her from obſerving her huſband ſtart, and look much chagrined when ſhe communicated this piece of intelligence to him. — As jealouſy ſeldom produces much affection for its object, ſo it has an inſeparable inclination to remove that object far out of reach.—Mrs. Turnbull, therefore, on the revival of her ſuſpicions, ſoon found means to ſupply the place of Alice; and let her know, that now matters had gone ſo far with the farmer, it would be the moſt prudent ſtep to marry him very ſoon.

The

The friendly widow, to whom ſhe had opened all her heart at the firſt meeting after her walk home with Mr. Wilkins, and who had much perſuaded her to accept his offer, now very generouſly aſſured her, that if her Lady ſhould be ſpeedily provided, and ſhe were inclined to come away before the month, ſhe ſhould rejoice in having her company till the affair was more deliberately concluded on.—Nothing could be more acceptable to Alice than this; and, at a fortnight's end, ſhe left her miſtreſs with much ſatisfaction, and retreated to the widow's houſe. Mr. Wilkins's frequent viſits ſoon brought the buſineſs to a concluſion; and, on the third Sunday after, being duly aſked in the church, they were married in preſence of a numerous aſſembly of the neighbours, who greatly reſpected the worthy young farmer.

The curate being a poor man, and the father of ten children, was complimented with

with an invitation to dine that day, and all his family, with the happy couple.—And, as his cuſtom was, he gave them a ſermon adapted to the occaſion—with a ſincere good meaning, fixing on theſe words for his text—*All that is in the world, the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.* It was a fortunate time for the diſcuſſion of ſo intereſting a point, when the appearance of our new married friends kept an unuſual number of the audience awake.

"Theſe three," ſaid the honeſt Parſon, "are the leading paſſions which ſet the "whole world in motion—And that mo- "tion is oftentimes ſo violent, it ſets the "world in a flame.—The gratification of "theſe paſſions is but a temporary, and a "very dangerous pleaſure—but this grati- "fication is all that this world can afford "us."

I muſt

I muſt not dare to affirm that our amiable couple ſpent their firſt lunation of matrimony *in the moon itſelf*,—*that* heavenly luminary, whoſe revolutions are ſuppoſed to have ſuch extraordinary effects on the connections of human life;—or, in other words, that they lived *out of the world*.—But they paſſed theſe early days with as much of the Curate's happineſs as new-married people can be ſuppoſed to enjoy.—And as to the triple bliſs of this world, Reaſon (though ſhe was half fuddled) preſided over their tender joys; Love gave direction to the eye; and if, in their humble lot, they had pride of life, it was only the pride of living together.

Let it be here obſerved, for the ſober reflection of the rich and exalted, that in ſome ſcarce inſtances, a ſort of happineſs prevails among the lower claſſes of people, almoſt equal (at leaſt in appearance) to that which ſplendor and wealth are ſuppoſed ſo uniformly to enſure to the poſ-

ſeſſors.

ſeſſors. It is, no doubt, a deception on the poor creatures, though an happy one; and it were a pity that they ſhould be undeceived. If the ſources of it, which are ignorance, and meanneſs of ſpirit, do but hold out till death, they are almoſt in a condition as enviable as that of the richeſt commoner in England, or the firſt miniſter of ſtate. This may help to make our apology with the more ambitious reader, for uſing ſome ſtrong expreſſions to deſcribe the happineſs of a farmer and his wife.

We have already hinted at the good liking which 'Squire Turnbull had conceived for the youth and beauty of Alice: and often had his mouth watered when any accident threw her in his way. But the fear of raiſing the Devil in his own houſe, which it would be impoſſible for him ever to lay, even with the Curate's aſſiſtance, reſtrained him within due bounds.

The information which his lady gave of Alice's intended marriage, produced in

in him, indeed, a momentary vexation; but, on ſecond thoughts, he highly approved it; for reaſons which we may preſently explain.

As farmer Wilkins was his tenant, he honoured him, ſoon after his marriage, with a viſit; walked with him over his grounds; examined the buildings, and, of his own accord, propoſed ſeveral improvements and repairs, which, he told Wilkins, ſhould be executed without any expence to him; for he loved to encourage young beginners.—He condeſcended to ſit down and taſte a glaſs of the farmer's old beer, and was very facetious and chatty with Mrs. Wilkins: whoſe reſpectful, and yet eaſy manner, had a ſtrong effect on the amorous 'Squire.

This introductory viſit had opened the way for a greater familiarity; and he would ſometimes compliment Wilkins, by conſulting him in affairs relating to the management of ſome part of the eſtate. In

ſhort,

ſhort, the farmer became, in a little time, ſo great a favourite, that Mr. Turnbull requeſted him to act for him as his ſteward, in the room of old Thomſon, who was now ſuperannuated. As he made very advantageous offers to him, and his ſituation admitted of a proper attention to the duties of the office, he accepted it.

In a few weeks after this appointment, there was a conſiderable horſe-fair at about thirty miles diſtant. As Wilkins was one of the beſt judges of horſefleſh in the county, and the 'Squire had determined to purchaſe a new ſet for his coach, he deſired him to go over, and get this buſineſs accompliſhed for him.

This new employment was not very agreeable to Mrs. Wilkins, who could not help expreſſing her uneaſineſs at theſe two days abſence within the firſt two months of their happy union. But, on her fond huſband's aſſurance that he would ſhorten his ſtay as much as poſſible, ſhe avoided giving

giving any diſquiet to him, by indulging her own.

The evening Wilkins went, to the no little ſurprize of his wife, who had frequently entertained ſuſpicions which ſhe never communicated, the 'Squire called in, and found the huſband's place ſupplied by the good widow Rigby, who, with her little boy, had come over, at the earneſt ſollicitation of her friend, to keep her company during her huſband's abſence.

He thought to have found her alone, and his mortification at this diſappointment was very great, though he ſmothered it as well as he could—he entered into a converſation with the women, ſitting himſelf down between them with the greateſt familiarity. — He made much of little Tom, who received his civilities with a very baſhful reſerve, at firſt; but he ſoon aſſumed more confidence.

Mrs. Wilkins was a good deal embarraſſed when ſhe found that her viſitant

ſeemed reſolved to honour them with his company for the evening; but ſhe did not dare, for her huſband's ſake, to neglect any tokens of common reſpect; and, accordingly, aſking if he pleaſed to take ſuch refreſhment as their houſe afforded, ſhe brought a piece of cold gammon, and ſet ſome of the 'Squire's favourite liquor on the table.

We know not whether to approve or condemn Mrs. Wilkins's conduct in this inſtance. But ſo it was; and Mr. Turnbull the more readily accepted the humble invitation, as his Lady was confined, he ſaid, to her chamber, being taken ill that morning—So that he was quite lonely at home.

The beer and bacon were good—A lit-little ſnug fire, ſurrounded with every token of neatneſs, agreeably removed the chill of a September evening. The Squire eat with many commendations of his treatment, and drank till he was quite merry:

and

and now he began to be very ſweet and facetious with both the women. He would have a ſmack of each of them, that he would.—" I hope no offence Mrs. Wilkins " —If honeſt Wilkins were but here, I " know he would allow twenty of them."

This firſt effuſion of his merriment was paſſed over with a modeſt kind of indifference, by both: but when he became a little more free with his company, and ſwore he muſt have another ſmack, Mrs. Rigby began with a very reſentful countenance to beg " that he would behave " himſelf with a little more decency; that " though they were not people of fortune " like him, he had no right to inſult them " in this manner: and if he acted beneath " his character as a gentleman, he muſt " expect to be treated according to that he " aſſumed."

This ſpeech did not in the leaſt diſconcert the 'Squire: but laughing at the widow, he told her, " If ſhe did not like mirth

" and good fellowſhip, he was ſure his lit-
" tle angel here, would not be ſo angry
" with him"—And at the ſame moment flung his arms round Mrs. Wilkins; who ſtruggled ſome time in vain to get rid of him.

At this inſtant, little Tom, who had liſtened from the chimney corner and ſtared at all that paſſed, ſeeing his good friend Mrs. Wilkins in imminent danger as he thought, and very roughly treated, *reſolutely* aſſailed the 'Squire's legs with a thorn buſh, which lay by him half burnt; and by this attack diverted his whole attention to another object. The amorous 'Squire no ſooner ſaw what had given him this diſturbance, than he laughed very heartily at the boy; and ſitting down, was going to take him on his knee, when the little fellow ran away, hallowing and crying in ſuch a manner as not eaſily to be pacified.

Mrs. Wilkins could no longer contain herſelf; ſhe reproached him for his treatment

ment of her, and upbraided him for his meanneſs, in the moſt bitter terms her rage could ſuggeſt: ſhe was well ſeconded by the widow, who took her friend's part, and treated him very contemptuouſly.

The 'Squire, aware now that he had gone too far, ſubmiſſively aſked pardon; and carrying it off only as a little innocent mirth, quietly mended his draught, and after promiſing to favour the farmer with every advantage in his power, he withdrew, to the great relief of our two female friends, and the ſincere joy of poor Tom, who now hated the ſight of him.

The 'Squire who had been led into this trifling behaviour rather by accident than deſign, repented of having indulged himſelf in it, to the depriving him, perhaps, of a favourable opportunity in future to accompliſh his fixed purpoſe, which was by ſome means or other to have a taſte of the honeſt farmer's joys: for he had long fixed an eye of deſire upon the fair

Alice. His hopes were now a little diſturbed by his own imprudence, and yet his paſſions were more enflamed than ever by the rich cordial he had already ſipped. So much was he attracted by the charms of Mrs. Wilkins, that he could not brook the diſappointment of his ſchemes to improve his acquaintance with her during the farmer's abſence. We have hinted at his inclinations towards her when ſhe lived in his houſe; and that, ſhe was kept as much out of the way as poſſible, by her Lady. His honour had another affair of gallantry then on his hands, which kept him more in government of himſelf at home. This he had got weary of, and had been hatching ſchemes for the laſt fortnight of Alice's reſidence, to ſuperſede Wilkins in the poſſeſſion of a girl that appeared more lovely to him every day he ſaw her. But he had been diſappointed.

The marriage of Alice had not conquered his paſſion: and he ſeldom ſet his heart on

on any thing without uſing every poſſible means to accompliſh it. From hence proceeded all his kindneſs to the farmer.

In his opinion the moſt favourable opportunity now preſented itſelf—Her huſband's abſence—his own power and rank in the country,—a timid woman that had long been taught to fear and reſpect him; all circumſtances ſeemed to conſpire to give an appearance of ſucceſs to any attempt he might be induced to make on her, and if every obſtruction was removed he had no ſort of doubt, ſuch was his opinion of the ſex, but that ſhe would yield to his offers. How to remove thoſe obſtructions, of which the friendly widow was the greateſt, employed his brain all the way home, and the remaining part of the night.

While his imagination was thus engaged, our two females were congratulating themſelves on his departure; and ſitting in judgment on his behaviour, condemned it

ſeverely: but they concluded it muſt be owing to his having drank too much; and agreed that he would never attempt ſuch unbecoming freedoms again, after the ſharp reproof he had met with from them both. They retired to enjoy that undiſturbed reſt which virtue ever enſures; nor did the intended victim of the 'Squire's brutal paſſions even dream of the villainous ſcheme that was then hatching againſt her honour and her peace.

When they aroſe in the morning, they expected the 'Squire would come to make ſome apologies for his conduct the preceding night, but they found themſelves agreeably diſappointed when he did not appear—Between five and ſix o'clock in the evening, farmer Johnſon, a neighbour of Mrs. Rigby's, called upon her at Mr. Wilkins's—The farmer ſeemed very much agitated, and was at a loſs to explain the reaſon of his coming to ſee her—The widow obſerving him in this ſituation, at

firſt imagined he was not well; and aſking him what was the matter, offered him a dram, which he accepted, and then getting a little more ſpirit, he broke the ice as cautiouſly as he could for fear of alarming the widow and Mrs. Wilkins, and told his ſtory—not without marks of terror and affright — The purport of it was, — "That as his man was coming "home from plough about four o'clock, "he was met by a man on horſeback "muffled up in a great coat, with a "monſtrous noſe, which frightened the "poor fellow ſo he could take notice of "nothing elſe—that this man aſked him "if he did not belong to farmer John-"ſon; to which being anſwered that he "did, he gave him a letter, which he "deſired him to give directly into his "maſter's hands as ſoon as ever he got "home.—That he rode off then as faſt "as the beaſt could go, without ſaying "any more—and the man gave him the

" letter, which the farmer ſhewed, and in-
" formed them that there was a deſign
" to ſet fire to his houſe, and the widow
" Rigby's that night—That the writer of
" that letter, deteſting ſuch damnable cru-
" elty, had given them warning, that they
" might take care of themſelves, by watch-
" ing all night; and ſigned himſelf, his un-
" known friend"

This epiſtle threw the poor widow into dreadful agitations; and the farmer was not more compoſed. A council was immediately held, to conſider what was beſt to be done; and it was unanimouſly agreed, that it would be the ſafeſt and moſt prudent ſtep for the widow to go home, and ſit up all night, with lights in the different parts of the houſe, to ſhew the villains that they were up and on their guard. As a further protection, Mrs. Wilkins offered one of her men to the widow to ſit up along with her, and Johnſon offer'd another. Mrs. Rigby, and Tommy, who would not

be

be left behind, and the farmer, who was very uneaſy till he got home, accompanied by one of Mrs. Wilkins's ſervants, ſet out to protect their dwellings from the deſigns of the incendiaries; and, in imagination, they had already anticipated the horrors of the conflagration.

The ſagacious reader will perceive, in this terrible letter, the conſequence of the 'Squire's machinations: for it was no other than a favourite ſervant of his that deliver'd the letter to Johnſon's ploughman, which he wrote himſelf, yet was ſo diſguiſed by the help of a fictitious noſe, that he rendered himſelf unknown. He expected that Johnſon would communicate the contents of this horrid ſcroll to the widow; and every thing happened as he wiſhed. He rejoiced therefore in the ſucceſs of his ſchemes, when he ſaw Johnſon and the widow leave Mrs. Wilkins's houſe. Will, for ſo was his thorough-paced pandar called, hurried home to acquaint his maſter

in what train things were. He had not been idle; for, concluding that ſo dreadful a deſign would alarm the farmer and the widow, and make her leave Mrs. Wilkins, which was what he aimed at; he had, in the mean time, been ſounding Wilkins's ploughman, a drunken lazy fellow, and found him apt for his purpoſe. Gaining him therefore to aſſiſt him in whatever he ſhould deſire, by the actual bribe of half a guinea, and many promiſes, he prevailed on him to admit him privately into his maſter's houſe at night, when there ſhould be no fear of a diſcovery. His ſanguine imagination now repreſented his wiſhes compleated, and his paſſion gratified. He went, at the hour appointed by his truſty agent, to the farmer's houſe, where he was received by the ploughman, and conducted to his bed, where he was informed he might lie undiſcovered, as that was the only place that his miſtreſs did not ſearch every night before ſhe went to bed. Here lay

the libidinous 'Squire, anxiouſly expecting the time for the ſervants to retire to reſt, and give him an opportunity of reaching Mrs. Wilkins's chamber. At laſt the houſe was quiet: and having given his prey time enough to get ſettled in her firſt ſleep, he ſtruck a light with a piſtol tinder-box he had in his pocket, and lighted his dark lanthorn, which was his conſtant companion on all ſuch expeditions, and purſued his way through the houſe to Mrs. Wilkins's chamber. The latch of the door was gently lifted up, and he had gained admiſſion into the room before the gentle Alice was alarmed by the approach of her deſtroyer. As he ſtepped, the floor creaked, and Mrs. Wilkins awaked. She could ſcarcely credit her eyes, when, by the help of the almoſt expired candle on the hearth, ſhe perceived, or fancied ſhe perceived, a man approaching her bedſide. She was ſoon relieved from her doubts by a diſagreeable certainty of the reality. The

'Squire,

'Squire, ſeeing her eyes open, threw himſelf on his knees, and began the attack in the moſt ſoothing manner—ſwearing how long he had loved her, and how much—that he could not live without her—and unleſs——She now had got the better of her fears; and her indignation at his baſe attempt on her honour, roſe in proportion to the heinouſneſs of his crime. She interrupted, and told him ſhe knew not how he had got acceſs to her chamber, but ſuppoſed it was by ſome baſe and villainous means—that ſhe inſiſted upon his retiring inſtantly, or ſhe would alarm the houſe, and call the ſervants up to treat him as he deſerved, but though ſhe was innocent, yet her character might, nevertheleſs, ſuffer; and ſhe hoped he would not be ſo cruel as to injure her.

This parley only ſerved to inflame his deſires. He repeated his vows of affection, and, drawing nearer to the bed, attempted to put his hand on her boſom; ſhe ſcreamed

out,

out, and, by that means, awoke Molly, who lay in the ſame bed with her in her huſband's abſence, and whom all the preceding converſation had no effect upon, as it was uttered in a low voice; nor did the amorous 'Squire perceive Mrs. Wilkins's companion, who, fatigued with the toils of the day, lay in a deep ſleep by her ſide, almoſt entirely covered by the bedcloaths, till the ſcream, her miſtreſs gave, rouſed her. Alarmed, though not thoroughly wakened, ſhe ſtarted up-an-end in the bed, and aſked what was the matter. The 'Squire, aſtoniſhed at this unexpected aid on the ſide of the miſtreſs, ſtood aghaſt and confounded. Mrs. Wilkins then repeated her deſire of his abſence; which he refuſing to comply with, Molly ſlipped on her petticoats, and, faſtening her gown about her, lay'd hold of the 'Squire by the collar, and fairly dragged him out of the room; not without much ſtruggling, though the conſequence proved that ſhe was endowed

dowed with more corporal ſtrength than he was, though a man of three thouſand a year. When ſhe had got him on the ſtairs he began to expoſtulate with her, and endeavoured to prevail on her, by offering her five guineas, to conduct him back to her miſtreſs again. But this, and every other argument he could urge, ſhe rejected with great contempt; and telling him ſhe would not quit him till ſhe ſaw him fairly out of the houſe, adding a few taunts at his want of ſtrength ſufficient to reſiſt her, and that it was not worth her while to call any of the men to her aſſiſtance; he found it would be ineffectual to ſtay any longer, ſo he marched down ſtairs with the victorious Molly in the rear, who opened the door and thruſt him into the yard, telling him to cool his courage there; then faſtening the doors, ſhe returned to her miſtreſs, who was, by this time, up and dreſſed, looking through a window at the diſappointed 'Squire trudging homewards. After thanking

thanking Molly for her timely and vigorous aſſiſtance, and deſiring her not to mention this matter on any account, they went to bed again. Molly ſoon fell aſleep, but Mrs. Wilkins could not compoſe herſelf, ſo much had ſhe been alarmed at this deſperate attempt; many things did ſhe revolve in her imagination, and, among the reſt, conceived an imperfect notion of the 'Squire's ſcheme of getting Mrs. Rigby out of the way, by ſending this terrible letter, already mentioned. However, ſhe did not cloſe her eyes till day-light; aſſured of her ſafety, and then her fears ſubſided, and ſhe got a little ſleep.

The following evening her huſband was to return, and how to tell him this affair ſhe knew not.—Much did ſhe ſuffer in her own mind, before ſhe could come to any reſolution.—Mrs. Rigby arrived very ſeaſonably to her relief—To her ſhe imparted the whole tranſaction, and aſked her advice how to act.—The widow, who had

more

more experience than her friend, ſeemed to think the whole affair was a ſcheme of Turnbull's, and that a man who was capable of taking ſuch extraordinary means to accompliſh his vile purpoſes, was much to be dreaded.—She was convinced that there was no deſign of ſetting her houſe on fire, and that the letter was only a ſcheme to draw her out of the way.—Mrs. Wilkins was for acquainting her huſband; but her friend adviſed her rather to delay doing ſo, till they ſhould ſee how the 'Squire would behave on his return.

The farmer had called at the 'Squire's as he came by, and learned from the coachman that he was to go for London with the family, on the next day but one. When he mentioned this circumſtance in the evening to his wife (after the firſt two hours mutual congratulations and endearments were over) it ſufficiently enforced the prudence of the widow's advice: but it was not without great pain, that a female mind could

could be reſtrained from communicating an intereſting ſecret to a party ſo much concerned, and ſo ſincerely loved. Only the fear of miſchief that might happen to her huſband from his juſt reſentment of ſuch baſe uſage, could have over-balanced that pain.

Mr. Wilkins the next morning quietly ſettled his buſineſs of the horſes, in which he had ſucceeded to Mr. Turnbull's ſatisfaction, who liberally rewarded him for his trouble: and the day after the family ſet off for London; Mrs. Turnbull's bad ſtate of health, and the importance of proper advice, being the ſuppoſed inducement, for their going two months earlier than uſual.

Words cannot well deſcribe the rage and vexation which poor Wilkins manifeſted, when he heard from his wife a full account of the infamous attempt that had been made. He was naturally of a very calm and patient temper. But touched in ſo

tender

tender a point, it is no wonder that every painful paſſion was irritated by ſuch a provocation.

He could not help, for the firſt time, expreſſing a ſhort anger that this affair had been concealed from him, till his enemy had eſcaped, for he had the bittereſt revenge in his heart at the inſtant. But the fever abating by degrees, he could not reply to the vindication which Mrs. Wilkins made of her own prudence in the delay: and her old friend the widow coming in to ſee how matters went, they by degrees reſtored the worthy farmer to ſome compoſure. However he immediatly wrote the following letter to the 'Squire.

To JAMES TURNBULL, Eſq.

"SIR,

"YOU will not be much ſurprized at "hearing from me in this manner: "but I am determined to have as little to "do

"do as poſſible with ſuch men as your-
"ſelf. You thought fit to make me ſtew-
"ard of your eſtate, but I will have no
"more to do with it: and ſhall leave my
"farm and the ſcandalous neighbourhood
"of it as ſoon as poſſible. So you will
"pleaſe to take this as warning, and pro-
"vide as you ſee fit.

"I leave you to the juſt reproaches of
"your conſcience — if you have one,
"which will tell you how much you have
"injured and inſulted me who would
"have been to you otherwiſe

An uſeful and faithful ſervant,

JOHN WILKINS.

P. S. I ſhall be glad to ſettle all my accounts with any proper perſon you think fit to appoint, or with any body rather than yourſelf.

About

About a week after this letter, a perſon was ſent to ſettle with Mr. Wilkins; and that buſineſs being done, he applied himſelf to providing another farm, which after a great deal of trouble was accompliſhed.

He alſo diſpoſed of the little freehold before mentioned very advantageouſly; and as he could not ſurrender the leaſe which he had from Lord L——, or aſſign it to any other tenant without his Lordſhip's permiſſion, he went over to the great hall to obtain leave for that purpoſe, as he had been offered a very handſome conſideration for the remainder of his term. His Lordſhip was then in the country, and always had a very good opinion of Wilkins; and as his anceſtors had been for a long time tenants to the L——'s family, he expreſſed great concern at his reſolution of quitting that part of the country, and aſked his reaſon for doing ſo. This the farmer could not give, and rather evaded

The

the queſtion. Indeed it was by his wife's ſolicitations that he was induced to quit that part of the country: he would have remained and defended the honour of his wife at all hazards, but her timidity and entreaties prevailed over his reſolutions; and when he had got his affairs ſettled, they went acroſs to Berkſhire where he had procured a large farm, and Mrs. Rigby at their earneſt requeſt quitted her little houſe, and accompanied them. Wilkins could not help grieving at being thus obliged to quit the land of his fathers, and conceived it very hard that the villainy of one great and rich man ſhould thus embitter his happineſs, and force him to ſeek a ſettlement among ſtrangers if he wiſhed to preſerve his wife from inſults, and her honour from contamination. Theſe are the injuries which no law remedies, and which yet are very grievous. But ſurely the day will come, when the proud oppreſſor ſhall repent of his injuſtice,

tice, and the wealthy ſpoiler ſhall lament his miſdeeds, and wiſh he had reſtored an hundred-fold; when humility and modeſt virtue ſhall be exalted, and the proud and the ſcornful abaſed.

## BOOK II.

DURING their journey in that part of Oxfordſhire, through which our exiles were obliged to paſs, Mrs. Rigby obſerved to her companions, that ſhe had ſpent ſome of the happieſt moments of her life in that county, and the remembrance of them were yet dear to her.—Mrs. Wilkins declared ſhe was very much rejoiced that their road lay that way, ſince it gave her pleaſure.—"In this county," ſaid the widow, "I paſſed ſeveral years, and formed "thoſe connections which gave me much "pleaſure then, and have been the cauſe "of my preſent independance." This was the

the firſt time that ever the widow ſeemed willing to communicate her affairs; for our young couple only knew her as a friend and a neighbour, and, as ſuch, eſteemed her.—Wilkins, therefore, endeavoured to improve this diſpoſition, which, he hoped, might lead her to make a diſcovery of herſelf, and aſked her, what part of Oxfordſhire ſhe had reſided in. She replied, "In the village of C—, in Dr. Wakefield's "family."—Mrs. Wilkins aſked if he was any relation to that Lady whom ſhe had ſeen at her houſe of that name.—"She is the Doctor's daughter, and my "very good friend," replied the widow.—Mrs. Wilkins throwing out ſome hints that ſhe ſhould like to know how ſhe came into that family, as ſhe was born in a diſtant county; and her huſband ſignifying a like curioſity,—"I aſſure you, "my good friends," ſaid ſhe, "I have "very little to relate concerning myſelf, "that will afford you entertainment; but,

" as you ſeem to deſire it, I will, as far as " my memory will hold out, give you all " the hiſtory of my family, and of thoſe " circumſtances which have been of the " moſt importance to me in life.—They " are not very intereſting; but the rela- " tion may ſerve to beguile the tediouſ- " neſs of the way, &c.

" My father, whoſe name was Janſon, " lived at B— in Leiceſterſhire for many " years: he was a man of ſome conſe- " quence in the town; for there were, at " leaſt, an hundred people in it, who de- " pended upon him for their daily bread, " which he diſtributed to them with the " greateſt chearfulneſs imaginable: but I " do not ſay that he was quite diſintereſted " in this; for, by his induſtry at his buſi- " neſs as a baker, he had increaſed the " little wealth my grandfather had left " him, to ſuch a ſum as enabled him to " live in a decent and comfortable manner: " although my father's pocket would not

" afford

"afford his children any very expenſive
"education, we were brought up in a
"ſort of a genteeliſh way: but it was
"purely owing, I muſt ſay, to his care
"that we had any education at all. For
"though it is rather ſhocking to give an
"ill character of ſo near a relation as a
"mother, yet I will aſſure you, Mrs.
"Wilkins, ſhe was the moſt like Mrs.
"Watſon, whoſe miſmanagement of her
"family, and her indolence we have ſo
"often heard cenſured, of any perſon I
"know. There were no other children
"than myſelf and a younger ſiſter; they
"had more who died in infancy. As my
"mother had the misfortune to be born a
"gentlewoman, ſhe could not bear the
"thoughts of looking after any of her
"houſhold concerns, or even aſſiſting the
"ſervant in any thing that related to us.
"From the time that I was old enough
"to make compariſons between the tem-
"pers of people, I grew aſhamed of the

" pride and ſlothfulneſs that appeared in " my mother's behaviour, and which in- " creaſed in her every day.

" My father was often very unhappy " at this; and I believe now, that he " thought himſelf in a worſe ſtate than if " he had been a widower. He had a faith- " ful and uſeful ſervant to look after us: " but ſhe had full employment for one " perſon in attending my mother. The " expences of ſo ill managed a family " were not very ſmall; for the good na- " ture of my dear father, provided not " only what we wanted, but almoſt every " thing my mother choſe.

" There is ſome truth perhaps in the old " proverb that," ' A light heeled mother ' makes a heavy heeled daughter.' " But " indeed it was not verified in our family: " the reverſe of it was rather manifeſted " there. My father having contracted the " utmoſt averſion to indolence, (if he had " it not naturally) took care that we

" ſhould

" ſhould be brought up in every ſpecies
" of induſtry. And at my eighteenth
" year, though as attentive as he could
" be to his buſineſs, yet, he was ſo a-
" larmed with the apprehenſion of being
" quite reduced, that he parted with the
" ſervant, and all the buſineſs of the fa-
" mily fell on me and my ſiſter.

" My mother was mortified greatly at
" this, but was obliged to ſubmit to it.
" But whatever trouble it gave her it ſoon
" ſubſided; for ſhe was accuſtomed to caſt
" off every thing from her mind that gave
" her uneaſineſs, and ſeemed to be vexed
" at any thing only as far as it tended to
" diſturb her into action. The life we
" lived was a very diſagreeable one to me.
" I uſed to riſe early, and get the houſe
" to rights againſt my father choſe to
" breakfaſt. At about eleven o'clock in
" the day my mother roſe, and in about
" two hours would put every thing about in
" confuſion again, and keep me fully em-
" ployed

" ployed in fetching her this thing, carry-
" ing away that, and changing it for ano-
" ther; ſo that we ſeldom got a dinner in
" any regular time, and without ſome vex-
" ation to my father. The miſchievous
" effects of indolence appeared ſtrongly to
" me, during the laſt year of my poor mo-
" ther's life: ſhe grew very fat and purſy,
" and had frequent diſorders in a variety of
" forms, that threatened her with the event
" which ſoon followed. A complication
" of diſeaſes baffled all the aſſiſtance that
" could be got for her, and the procuring
" of which involved my father in great ex-
" pences; and after being given over for
" above two months, ſhe died."

" I own, Mrs. Wilkins, it ſhocks me to
" think of my diſpoſition at that time: but,
" if I ſpeak the truth, I was really glad at
" heart at this change."

" Why, I ſuppoſe," ſaid Mrs. Wilkins,
" you were not glad, really, at your mo-
" ther's death, but on account of the much
" happier

"happier ſtate you were in by means of "that event."

"Very true, I ſhould have grieved, nay I "did grieve at the thoughts of never ſeeing "her more, and at the ſolemnity of death "in our family; but I was, indeed, intro-"duced by it to a happier ſtate, for almoſt "a twelvemonth. It was a delight to me, "now, to be at the head of my father's "little family, and find myſelf capable "(which I never was before) of putting "things in ſuch order as pleaſed him. But, "in about eight months time, we loſt my "father's company, which uſed to chear us "of an evening, and were much left to "ourſelves. He married a ſecond wife "within the twelvemonth, which put a "compleat end to all my happineſs at "home. I have often obſerved ſince, how "natural it is for people to fly from one "extreme to another. My father, no "doubt, had determined with himſelf, that "if ever he married again it ſhould be to "a woman of ſome life and ſpirit; and, per-

" haps, might be ſo intent on this part of " her character as to be blind to every " thing elſe. My new mother was about " eight years older than myſelf: a ma- " naging woman; and well qualified to " govern every branch of a family, not ex- " cepting the huſband himſelf.

" It can afford you no pleaſure, my dear " Mrs. Wilkins, to relate to you my daily " increaſing unhappineſs under this new " adminiſtration: in a few words, before " ſix months were paſt I loſt all my repu- " tation as a houſewife, and all my com- " fort as a daughter; and for the greater " part of a year I had not the good fortune " to do one ſingle thing, even by accident, " as I ſhould.

" My father had, however, compaſſion " enough to releaſe me from my bondage, " by providing a place for me in the town; " where I had to wait on an old lady of " conſiderable fortune. With her I conti- " nued till death removed her from any

" father

" farther need of a ſervant or a companion.

" After ſpending a week at home, I " got into an advantageous ſtation, in a re- " putable family at Leiceſter: there were " three young ladies, on whom I attended; " and they had one brother, a youth of " about nineteen years of age, the libertine " favourite of a fond father and mother. " From his ridiculous behaviour I had no " ſmall trouble, before I had been there " two months; but by the favour of his " ſiſters, who ſhewed great love for me; " and the young gentleman being ſent to " a military ſchool near London, I paſſed " away two years very happily. I had " great opportunity of improving myſelf " in needlework, and, beſides that, of get- " ting an acquaintance with the beſt books " of entertainment and inſtruction: for I " was often employed in reading to the " young ladies, under the direction of " their mother, who was a very ſenſible, " prudent woman. But my military gen-

" tleman's return, at length, interrupted
" this peaceful ſtate of quiet and happineſs.
" He ſeemed to think it but a natural
" right, belonging to his new character,
" to have an entire liberty with every
" young woman whoſe face pleaſed him,
" which mine had the misfortune to do.
" I hardly think it worth while to tell you
" of the many impudent attempts he made
" on me, which, I dare ſay, he thought
" were exceſſively worthy of him; but
" there is one which I muſt not omit, as
" it had really like to have been a very
" unhappy one for me.

" There happened to be a good deal of
" company in the houſe one night; and I
" was obliged to give up my chamber to
" the ſervants of a Lady, who was there
" on a viſit, and lodge with the houſe
" maid.

" My companion having extraordinary
" buſineſs to do, roſe very early, ſome
" hours before my uſual time. My

" fine

" fine young maſter, as I found afterwards,
" had ſat up with two fit companions of his
" who were there, till morning light had
" warned them to get to bed: and they
" met the maid coming down, as they
" went up ſtairs. Whether he heard any
" thing the night before that put ſome
" ſcheme in his head which the ſeeing her
" up might aſſiſt him in, or not, I do not
" know: but I met with ſuch a ſurpriſe,
" as almoſt put me out of my ſenſes: for
" I had but juſt fallen aſleep again after
" being diſturbed by her geting up, when
" I was awakened thoroughly by the preſ-
" ſure of his impudent arms round me:
" for he ſoon gave me to know it was no
" other than himſelf, in a tone of voice
" which ſeemed to ſuppoſe I ſhould treat
" him with reſpect. How I eſcaped, I can
" hardly tell you; but conſidering the in-
" famous advantages he had, I have often
" wondered at it. Whether he was afraid
" of my alarming the houſe or not, I can-

" not tell: however, he left the room very
" quietly.

" The next morning I relinquiſhed my
" place, plainly informing his mother of
" the reaſon: who would fain have had
" me ſtay; promiſing to prevent any dan-
" ger of the like kind for the future. I
" was rather inclined to go, and did ſo
" in a month's time; but ſhe was ſo far
" ſenſible of the great reaſon I had for de-
" ſiring to leave her, that ſhe not only for-
" gave me, but very ſtrongly recommended
" me to Dr. Wakefield's, who was then
" a widower, and had one only daughter,
" upon whom it was my happy lot to at-
" tend. You have ſeen the young lady at
" my houſe Mrs. Wilkins, but could have
" no opportunity to know more of her
" than that ſhe was then exceedingly hand-
" ſome."

" Yes I remember," ſaid Mrs. Wilkins,
" it was the week before I firſt met Mr.
" Wilkins at your houſe. I took great

" notice

" notice of the lady, and I thought then " ſhe was the fineſt figure of a woman I " ever ſaw. She had ſuch a delightful " complexion, ſuch ſoftneſs in her fea- " tures, and there was ſomething ſo grace- " ful in her perſon, that I well recollect " how much I was taken with her: and I " thought more reſpectfully of you, than " I had done before, when I obſerved her " converſe with you with ſo much fami- " liarity and cordiality, and ſuch humility " and benignity in her looks, and I liked " her the better for taking ſo much notice " of little Tommy."

" She was about ſixteen when I firſt " went there: and I was ſoon convinced " of the happineſs of my ſituation: ſhe " treated me with ſo much kindneſs, and " ſhewed ſo much genuine goodneſs of " temper, as quite engaged my whole af- " fection. Indeed it was evident ſhe had " received the beſt impreſſions of the mind " from the virtues of her father, who was

" a very

" a very worthy man. He had ſeveral good " livings, beſides an eſtate from his own " family, and you would be ſurprized to " think what a bleſſing he was to the whole " neighbourhood. His houſe was the ſeat " of benevolence, plenty, and peace. He " had married late in life, and had loſt " his wife about ſeven years before I went " there. This only daughter, the centre " of all his beſt earthly affections, had been " the conſtant object of his cares: he ſpar- " ed no expence nor pains in her educa- " tion: and enjoyed the utmoſt ſatisfaction " in the daily evidences of her improve- " ment. She was miſtreſs of ſeveral of the " modern languages; and he had inſtructed " her in every branch of knowledge within " his compaſs, which might contribute to " her uſefulneſs or enjoyment in life.

" I had the happineſs to obtain the con- " fidence of this young Lady; and may " ſay, lived five years in the family, the " happieſt of any in my life. There were

" ſome

" ſome events which happened while I was
" there, which would be much more en-
" tertaining to you than any I have related
" concerning myſelf: but I muſt not on
" any account enter upon them.

" When I had paſſed two years in this
" agreeable family, Mr. Rigby made his
" addreſſes to me. He had lived a long
" while as a gardener with the Doctor, be-
" ing bred up in that profeſſion by his fa-
" ther, who had ſerved in that capacity for
" thirty years: his father had left him ſome
" money, which his induſtry had increaſed.
" He was a hanſome ſprightly young man,
" and made much greater advances in my
" affection, than I was for a long time wil-
" ling he ſhould know.

" Often had he diſtinguiſhed me in his
" eſteem, by a variety of little ſervices:
" and whenever he brought in a freſh ſup-
" ply of flowers for my young Lady's
" chimney, I was ſure to have an elegant
" noſegay from him, which pleaſed me

" more

" more by his manner of giving, than by
" all its fragrance.

" He opend his mind to me one morn-
" ing, when I had beèn early into the gar-
" dens to enjoy the ſweet ſcents of the flow-
" ers, and happened to turn my ſteps to
" the part where he was working. But
" though he met not at firſt with that en-
" couragement which the ſincerity and vir-
" tue of his paſſion merited, yet I walked
" in the garden every morning that was
" fair, and at length was ſeldom to be met
" with any where elſe, when diſengaged
" from my dear young Lady. She ſoon
" diſcovered our amour, and wiſhed hearty
" ſucceſs to it. I conſulted with my father,
" who approved of the match, and told
" me, he would give Mr. Rigby as much
" as he could ſpare out of the money he
" had ſaved in buſineſs: for he had been
" very ſucceſsful and ſaving ſince my mo-
" ther's death. Having this encouragement
" to think of ſettling for life, we thought

" of

" of marrying ſoon: and Doctor Wake-
" field, on knowing our engagements, very
" kindly offered us a continuance in the
" houſe, till we could diſpoſe of ourſelves
" more conveniently in the neighbour-
" hood, propoſing to continue Mr. Rigby
" in his employment. Accordingly in a
" few weeks time his curate pronounced
" the nuptial bleſſing on us: and I aſſure
" you the day of this ceremony was a moſt
" chearful feſtival to all the ſervants in the
" family, by the Doctor's liberality, and the
" kind attention of his amiable daughter.

" In ſome time after, Mr. Rigby provid-
" ed a ſmall tenement within a mile of the
" houſe; where he had a little nurſery of
" his own that ſerved to bring us in a to-
" lerable ſubſiſtence. Our humble but
" happy dwelling was often honoured by the
" company of Miſs Wakefield, who had
" now taken my ſiſter into my place, on
" my making application to her for this
" purpoſe.

" Things

"Things not anſwering well there, Mr. "Rigby had the offer of an advantageous "place in the 'Squire's family, as you "know, and with the Doctor's approba-"tion accepted it.

"He had a nurſery there, and was be-"ginning to thrive in the world, when he "was taken violently ill with a fever, "which aroſe from a cold, and died in "a ſhort time, leaving me diſconſolate, "and never will I," ſaid ſhe, ſhedding ſome tears at the recollection of her loſs, "never "will I change my ſtate again.

"You now know almoſt as much of "my hiſtory, Mrs. Wilkins, as I do my-"ſelf. I have only to add, that I am to "this hour under the greateſt obligations "to the kind generous heart of Miſs Wake-"field, for the capacity of living in ſo "eaſy and happy a way as I do at pre-"ſent."

Wilkins and his wife returned many thanks to their friend for imparting her hiſtory

hiſtory to them: they expreſſed much admiration of the Doctor's character, and aſked if he was yet living: to which Mrs. Rigby replied, that he had been dead theſe two years; and that ſhe had not ſeen Miſs Wakefield ſo long, that ſhe was anxious to know what was become of her, and would write to her and inform her where ſhe was removed to, as ſoon as ever they were ſettled, which took up ſome time and trouble before it was compleated. Mrs. Rigby accordingly wrote to her friend Miſs Wakefield, who ſoon after came over and ſpent ſome days at the farmer's. Her deportment there only ſerved to encreaſe the good opinion which they had of her, and her fondneſs for little Tommy, then between three and four years old, which the child returned, and was much delighted with, endeared her to them.

Whether it was that Miſs Wakefield was pleaſed with the Wilkins's family, or from what other motive it was that ſhe came

came ſo frequently there, and held many private conferences with her friend Mrs. Rigby, the farmer and his wife could not tell. But we, poſſeſſed of that inſtructive knowledge and penetration, which ever attend a biographer and hiſtorian, ſhall explain the cauſe of Miſs Wakefield's viſits at Wilkins's, and the ſubject of the conferences that were held between her and the widow. They were related to the farmer and his wife by Mrs Rigby; but inſtead of following her manner, we ſhall aſſume the pen in our own proper perſon, and unravel the whole affair to him, by firſt making him acquainted with the hiſtory of Miſs Wakefield.

The very pleaſant village of C——n, in Oxfordſhire, was not ſo happy in being waſhed by the ſwift-gliding Thames, nor yet in being ſituated on the ſide of a moſt fruitful hill, as in the reſidence of Dr. Wakefield there; whoſe good ſenſe, and benevolence of heart, had a peculiar efficacy on the manners of the whole neigh-

neighbourhood—who were his pariſhioners. He had been now twenty years in poſſeſſion of the living, and was in the commiſſion of the peace. His affluent circumſtances, (for beſides two conſiderable livings, he had a paternal eſtate) enabled him to do a great deal of good; and a temper remarkably compaſſionate, diſpoſed him to ſeize every opportunity of relieving diſtreſs.

He had been a widower ten years, when his only remaining child, a daughter, was juſt turned of ſeventeen.—Here centered all his beſt earthly affections. In her he loved the image of her mother;—he loved her too for her own virtues. No pains had been ſpared in her education, nor were any advantages towards compleating it loſt upon Maria, whoſe accompliſhments, in perſon and mind, were every day improving.

There was once a ſon too, who, had he lived, would have been near twenty years

years old, and muſt have conſiderably leſſened Maria's ſhare of parental affection. But it pleaſed Providence to diſappoint the Doctor's ſanguine hopes, when they had riſen to a great height, by a fixed and well-digeſted plan for his eſtabliſhment in life.

Although the Doctor's houſe was the ſeat of plenteous hoſpitality, his intimate acquaintance were limited to a ſmall number. Mr. Wroughton, a facetious old gentleman, of an eaſy fortune, lived about half a mile from him on the one ſide; and juſt out of the village, on the other ſide, was the elegant houſe of Mr. Tompkins, who, with his wife and family, reſided there during the ſummer months, and was greatly reſpected by all the neighbourhood. A very happy intimacy ſubſiſted between theſe agreeable neighbours; but Mr. Wroughton, being always in the country, had rather the preference.

Mr.

Mr. Charles Kingſley, a young clergyman, who performed the duties of a curacy in the other living of the Doctor's, about twelve miles diſtant, was almoſt one of his family, ſpending all the time he could diſcreetly ſpare from the ſervices of the pariſh, with Dr. Wakefield, who had a great affection for him. His father had been a friend to the Doctor in his former part of life, and a ſtrict intimacy ſubſiſted between Charles and Maſter Wakefield, from their infancy to the day of his death. They had been at the ſame ſchool before they were ſent to college. Nor was it at all ſtrange if the comely features, the ſpeaking eye, the manifeſt generoſity of mind, which were remarkable in Mr. Kingſley, alſo made ſome impreſſion on the young lady's heart. We cannot, therefore, but think the worthy Doctor rather imprudent, in countenancing the frequent viſits of his curate, if he had any averſion to thoſe natural conſequences that muſt neceſſarily ariſe

ariſe from his being ſo often there. But, perhaps, he had no ſuch averſion; and, though poſſeſſed of a conſiderable fortune, might have laid it down as his plan reſpecting his daughter, to obſerve the workings of her affection, and the virtues of her choice, and leave money out of the queſtion. However this might be, a very ſincere and mutual affection had taken place; and, for two years, it grew, without any direct diſcovery by either of the parties.

It was about three years after the introduction of Peggy Janſon, whom the reader is already acquainted with under the name of the Widow Rigby, into the Doctor's family, and Miſs Wakefield was about her nineteenth year, that a calm evening's walk, in the latter part of which the hitherto ſilent lovers were left alone, had introduced a very dangerous converſation between them. It was in the month of May, the ſweeteſt evening in the month,

and

and in the pleaſanteſt grove in the whole country. Mr. Kingſley's heart, tuned to love, broke forth in its moſt harmonious accents; nor were the pleaſing ſounds deſtitute of ſympathetic efficacy on the heart of the lovely Maria. She could not, ſhe would not, totally diſguiſe the favourable ſentiments ſhe had of him. He exulted in happineſs entirely new, and of the moſt refined nature. They agreed to love each other, for they could not help it; but agreed too, that it muſt be very carefully concealed from—whom?—Alas! from her fond father. It was the firſt concealment from him of any thing that Maria knew. No remarkable change of behaviour betrayed their ſecret; but it was an eaſe to Maria's breaſt, when ſhe had confidence enough in the faithful Peggy, to make her the repoſitory of her fond wiſhes.

The confinement of Dr. Wakefield by the gout, often confined his daughter alſo the greater part of the day, which ſhe

ſpent, partly, in reading to him, and partly at her needle. Mr. Kingſley, at the invitation of the Doctor, very often made a third in this party, and, by the ſenſible livelineſs of his converſation, and the reſpectful tenderneſs of his behaviour, diverted his benefactor, at the ſame time that he rivetted more firmly the chains of love. The ſituation of our young friends was, however, attended with pain. The conſtraint which they were obliged to put upon themſelves, the fear attending it, and the difficulty of getting a few favourable minutes alone, rendered them leſs happy than they were before the diſcovery of each other's heart. But the chief uneaſineſs to both aroſe from the principles of virtue. Maria could not but condemn herſelf for giving ſo much encouragement to Mr. Kingſley's paſſion, while her father was ignorant of the declaration he had made to her. And he could not pacify his mind on the reflection that he was abuſing

abuſing the hoſpitality and benevolence of his beſt friend, by an attachment which he could not even hope would be approved of.

The Doctor was taking his nap one afternoon, when Mr. Kingſley came on a viſit there, and found Miſs Wakefield alone; and, to the agony of his heart, found her in tears. He could not reſt without knowing why ſhe ſhed them, if it might poſſibly be in his power to relieve her. She aſſured him, without reſerve, that he had no ſmall ſhare in the cauſe of her diſtreſs—that ſhe had been thinking of what had paſſed between them at various times, without her father's knowing any thing of it—and what would be the conſequence, if he ſhould hear it by any accident? "Indeed, Mr. Kingſley," ſaid the lovely maid, "I cannot but think "it will be beſt for us to avoid each "other's company as much as poſſible,

" for there is no proſpect of happineſs for " us together."

Mr. Kingſley was ſtruck all of an heap, by a propoſal that raiſed every painful paſſion in his breaſt; and, for a conſiderable time, could not ſpeak a word. At length he found utterance. " To leave " you, to be ſeparated from you, my dear " Miſs Wakefield, it is death; and of my " own accord to avoid your company!— " it will be ſelf-murder. No; it is true, " I have been guilty of preſumption, in " the indulgence of my wiſhes — I did " not intend they ſhould have ever broken " ſilence; but they are now known to " you; and the loveliеſt of women will " excuſe me, if I yet hope the diſcovery " wasnot diſpleaſing to her."

" Mr. Kingſley," ſaid ſhe, " you have " known my mind too well; I could not " totally conceal it; nor is it, can it be " altered. But to what purpoſe, Sir, will " our farther acquaintance be? As it

" would

"would be madneſs in you to make any "propoſal to my father, ſo it will be very "diſhonourable to us both to continue a "private correſpondence on a ſubject up-"permoſt, I fear, in both our hearts.— "Where can it end?"

There was ſo much truth in this, that Mr. Kingſley could make no ſatisfactory reply to it. The tears ſtarted afreſh into Maria's eyes, and his were at once infected. They wept heartily together; and the reſult of one quarter of an hour's converſation afterwards was, that he conſented to ſhorten and decreaſe his viſits gradually, that nothing might be ſuſpected, and make trial of the efficacy of abſence towards their relief.

It was the preſſing ſollicitations of the young lady that forced him to this; and he took leave of her in the evening, after he had ſpent a few hours with the Doctor, with a heart beyond meaſure abſorbed in grief. Maria excuſed herſelf from ſupper,

on account of a violent head-ach. She retired to her chamber, and poured her griefs into the compaſſionate boſom of Peggy, who conſoled her to the beſt of her power.

A fortnight paſſed in the moſt painful feelings of mortified paſſions, before Mr. Kingſley returned. Maria had concealed the uneaſineſs of her heart, by a countenance as placid as ſhe could put on before her father; but happening to be with him in the parlour when the young curate arrived, her ſudden change of colour, and a ſort of confuſion in her manner, which the old gentleman could not but obſerve, gave him ſuſpicions on this head, which he did not chuſe to expreſs; while his daughter, pretending illneſs, and retiring, thought herſelf wholly unſuſpected.

The Doctor made no alteration in his conduct to Mr. Kingſley, but requeſted the favour of his company for a few days, to aſſiſt him in the tranſcribing ſome pieces which

which he intended for the preſs. Accordingly, the next day they ſet down to this buſineſs.

During the Doctor's uſual retirement after dinner, Mr. Kingſley indulged himſelf with a ſolitary and penſive walk in the gardens; Miſs Wakefield having left the room ſoon after the cloth was removed. He took the path that led to a favourite little temple, erected on a beautiful eminence, which overlooked a great extent of country, but was, nevertheleſs, perfectly retired. No ſooner had he opened the door, than he was ſtruck with the moſt pleaſing confuſion at the ſight of Miſs Wakefield, who was reclined on a ſofa, with a book in her hand, and, by the warmth of the weather, and the reſtleſs nights ſhe had lately had, was fallen faſt aſleep. He was about to withdraw; but her favourite little dog, with the moſt friendly ſollicitude for her ſafety, or for

his ſatisfaction, awaked her, on the firſt ſight of a companion.

Let the reader imagine, not her ſurprize, but her pleaſure at this incident; perhaps not totally an unexpected one. Let him forgive them that they embraced each other. The reſolution which duty on her part, and gratitude on his, had impoſed on them, had been repented an hundred times on both ſides; and both agreed it was impoſſible to be obſerved. They were only in ſtronger bondage now than ever.

But the principles of duty and gratitude were yet too deeply rooted, to be totally overcome by paſſion. Mr. Kingſley reſolved to throw himſelf on the mercy of his benefactor, and intreat the happineſs of his life at his hands. Maria dreaded the conſequence of this, but could not forbid him.

The next morning gave him a favourable opportunity for his purpoſe. He attended

tended the Doctor in his ſtudy. The buſineſs they were engaged in was concluded, and a general converſation took place. The moment poor Kingſley had uttered two unmeaning words towards his purpoſe, his tongue faultered, and his confuſion was viſible.—"You are not well, "Mr. Kingſley," ſaid the Doctor."—

"Not quite, Sir; I am diſordered a little; "I will retire."

"No, no—I will ring the bell, and John "ſhall bring you ſomething. What will "you have?"

"O Sir," ſaid Mr. Kingſley, on one knee, "forgive my preſumption — Let "me unburthen my heart to you, and I "will be perfectly ſubmiſſive to your de-"ciſion. I have been but too much in-"dulged in your family: and you will "be ſhocked, I fear, at my ingratitude, "when I preſume to mention Miſs Wake-"field's name to you. I have ſeen and "converſed, Sir, ſo often with your love-"ly daughter that —"

"You muſt ſay no more, Mr. Kingſley. "I perfectly underſtand you. We will "talk of any thing elſe at preſent, if you "pleaſe. Come," added the old gentleman, "let us walk in the garden a bit; "my foot is eaſier than it has been for "ſome time."

If Mr. Kingſley had ſome eaſe from having broken the ice, he was racked with the torture of ſuſpenſe, in an affair more intereſting to him than life. And the Doctor's ſudden interruption had ſomething ſo forbidding, and at the ſame time ſo myſterious and perplexing in it, that he could only at one moment imagine diſtant hope, and at the next find abſolute deſpair in it.

They had walked for ſome time, when the ſervant came to inform the Doctor that Mr. Walgrave and his ſon were within: on which the old gentleman went in to his company. They ſtaid dinner, and ſpent the evening; which addition of ſociety,

if

if it did not relieve the oppreſſion of Mr. Kingſley's mind, obliged him to uſe the natural means of diverting his thoughts. The converſation was rather of the gayer ſort, in which the viſitors had the greater ſhare. Mr. Walgrave was a neighbour of the Doctor's—a man of pleaſure: and his ſon, a very faſhionable modern young gentleman. The attention he paid to Miſs Wakefield all the afternoon, gave no very great ſatisfaction to her, and much leſs to the unhappy Kingſley.

In the morning he roſe from a ſleepleſs bed, and having vented his uneaſineſs to the dew-fraught inhabitants of the ſhrubbery, he met the Doctor and Miſs Wakefield at the breakfaſt table. Fear and diſtreſs ſat viſible on his forehead—Maria was in confuſion. Mr. Kingſley only opened his lips to propoſe returning home; which the Doctor prevented, by ſaying, he would be glad of his company to dinner if he could amuſe himſelf any way in the

interim, as he had ſome engagements till then.

On retiring to his ſtudy, he ſent for his daughter, who attended him with a thouſand conflicting thoughts—"Be ſeat-"ed, my love," ſaid he, "I have ſome-"thing to chat with you about." She ſeated herſelf in reſpectful down-caſt ſilence, *and* the Doctor proceeded.

"I have had a propoſal made to me, "my dear, that you are greatly intereſted "in." Maria's colour was changed to ſcarlet. "You know, Maria, how much "I have ſtudied your happineſs; and in "this affair, as I have an high opinion of "your diſcretion, I mean to conſult with, "not to command you. If I ſhould ever "be obliged to oppoſe your inclinations, "I will never force them to compliance "with any ſcheme of mine. Mr. Wal-"grave, my dear, ſpoke to me yeſterday, "on behalf of his ſon: he does you the "honour to think very highly of you,

"and

"and has made a very advantageous of-
"fer, if you can approve of the young
"gentleman. I ſhould ſuppoſe his per-
"ſon to be unexceptionable, and I know
"his circumſtances to be ſo. Tell me
"now, my child, tell me your firſt
"thoughts about this propoſal."

While the Doctor ſpoke thus to his daughter, his eye was very intently fixed on her countenance: ſhe continued ſilent for ſome time, rolling up the corner of her handkerchief, and, unable to give vent to her firſt thoughts, ſhe at lenghth ventured to put the ſecond in their place.

"I am ſure, papa, you are very kind
"to me, and I ought to do as you would
"have me: but—"

The handkerchief became of more real uſe to poor Maria, at the moment this exceptive word "but" had opened the door to numberleſs ideas at once: ſhe wept ſo ſincerely, that the old gentleman could ſcarce refrain from accompanying her.

her. But on her recovering a little, he intreated her to open her heart freely to him, and to tell him the real cauſe of her diſtreſs at the mentioning this offer of Mr. Walgrave's.

"I am not without objections to it my-
"ſelf," ſaid he; "but you muſt frankly
"tell me every thing that made you un-
"eaſy, and you ſhall find the ſame in-
"dulgence, my child, you ever met
"with."

"I do not think, Sir, I could ever love
"Mr. Walgrave as I ought to do," re-
plied Maria, a little emboldened by pa-
ternal tenderneſs; "and do you think,
"Sir, that he is a good man? I have
"heard but an indifferent character of him
"in our neighbourhood as to his mo-
"rals."

"You are very right, my dear, to make
"that a principal conſideration, and the
"objection is a very ſolid one: for I
"believe there is too much foundation

"for

"for the reports you have heard. But "ſuppoſe he ſhould ſincerely repent and "reform—he might make a good huſ- "band, and his fortune is very con- "ſiderable: ſhould not that have ſome "weight with you, Maria?"

"O Sir," replied ſhe, "you will, I "hope, excuſe me, if I uſe the inſtruc- "tions you have given me, againſt your- "ſelf now. I have learned to think "meanly of wealth, when it is propoſed "as a means of happineſs. I can hardly "ſuppoſe you would perſuade me to truſt "in the uncertainty of Mr. Walgrave's "reformation for the ſake of his for- "tune."

"Well, Maria, I did not mean to per- "ſuade you. But I muſt know, and you "muſt tell me in the ſincerity of your "heart; have I heard *all* your objec- "tions, my child?"

This queſtion, put as it was with great emphaſis and meaning, not a little con-

fuſed

fuſed Miſs Wakefield again; who began to ſuſpect, what was really true, that her father knew more of her heart than ſhe was aware of. She heſitated, attempted ſome reply, twice; but without power to make one.

"Was it the character of Mr. Walgrave "that firſt came into your mind, Maria, "when I told you of his offer; or—let "me help you a little—Have you not "ſeen a more amiable character ſome-"where that has no wealth to enhance its "value?"

"Oh, my dear papa, forgive me that "I have kept any thing from you! I "will tell you every ſecret of my heart, "and you ſhall diſpoſe of me as you "pleaſe. If you are angry with me, I "ſhall, indeed, wiſh I had never known "Mr. Kingſley!"

"He ſpoke to me yeſterday, Maria. "I heard him mention your name, and "cut him ſhort. I would hear no more

"till

"till I had fairly underſtood the whole "affair. I ſhould not have admitted his "viſits here ſo freely, if I had any invinci- "ble objections to his and your inclina- "tions. But I want to know how far "matters have gone between you—Do "not be ſurpriſed, my Maria, I have "not the leaſt ſuſpicion of an impropriе- "ty in your behaviour: but I would "know how long it is ſince Mr. Kingſley "firſt opened his mind to you, and what "countenance you have given him."

In reply to this, Maria was very frank, and related every circumſtance, not omitting the reſolution they had formed, and the motives to it; and concluded with aſſuring her father, that Mr. Kingſley had ever treated her in the moſt reſpectful manner poſſible. The old gentleman, when he had heard his daughter out, aſked her if ſhe had any objection to his ſending for Mr. Kingſley now, as he had ſomething to ſay to him on this head. She had

none;

none; but only choſe to retire, if he pleaſed.

It would be much too tedious to relate the particulars of this converſation. The Doctor well knew Mr. Kingſley's circumſtances. They were indeed low enough at preſent; and his only expectation was on the very precarious humour of an old aunt, who had refuſed long ago to ſee him, on account of a pique ſhe had entertained againſt his father. She was rich, and very peeviſh; but, however, the doctor undertook to uſe his beſt efforts towards a reconciliation, and gave Mr. Kingſley aſſurance of his approbation in the preſent affair, which ſhould not, he ſaid, depend on the ſucceſs of his endeavours with the aunt, however they turned out, for he would give him at leaſt a competency with his daughter; but they muſt not be in a hurrry, he diſliked haſty matches, and would have them ſee, at the end of one twelvemonth, whether they had

that ſteady and mutual affection which was ſo eſſential to the happineſs of the marriage ſtate.

No two people were ever more ſupremely bleſt than Mr. Kingſley and Maria, when he related to her, in the temple ſacred to Honour and Love before-mentioned, the encouragement he had met with from the beſt of fathers. They ſpent the afternoon hours there in the moſt pleaſing endearments of virtuous affection; and the old man's heart was itſelf exhilarated, when he awoke in the conſciouſneſs of communicating happineſs to the objects he loved.

He the next day wrote a reſpectful, but determinate, anſwer to Mr. Walgrave, who viſited him ſoon after, but found that the young Lady could not be prevailed on to give the ſmalleſt encouragement whatever to his ſon.

Doctor Wakefield, who had countenanced the mutual affection of his daughter and Mr. Kingſley, with the moſt rational

proſpect of her happineſs, had determined to try his utmoſt efforts towards a reconciliation with the young gentleman's aunt. He had written to her to D——, in Warwickſhire, where ſhe reſided, repreſenting the worthy character and bright accompliſhments of her nephew, and the great reſpect he appeared to maintain for her; requeſting ſhe would admit the young gentleman to expreſs that reſpect in his own perſon: but the reply which he received was not of the moſt encouraging aſpect; and he therefore thought, if he could have an interview with the old lady, it might be attended with better ſucceſs. To this purpoſe, being now in an eaſy ſtate of health, he undertook the journey with that chearful aſſiduity which always appeared about him, when engaged in the honourable employment of making peace. But having the additional view of rendering his intended ſon-in-law more eaſy in his circum-

circumſtances than he could otherwiſe be, made him more diligent; for he even promiſed himſelf, not only the reſtoration of him to her favour, but ſome ſubſtantial proofs of it, when he ſhould inform her of his intentions concerning his daughter. He conceived it neceſſary, on this occaſion, to appear himſelf the moſt reſpectably that he could, and accordingly put an additional pair to the chariot; and ſet out, intending to ſpend a week with ſome intimate friends in the way, leaving Miſs Wakefield in the moſt agreeable company to her, that ſhe could poſſibly have in his abſence, or perhaps, in his preſence either: For her affection for Mr. Kingſley increaſed on every opportunity of converſation with him. To a woman educated as Miſs Wakefield was, in a variety of uſeful and agreeable knowledge, and poſſeſſed of the unaffected humility which uſually accompanies ſuch an education in a good mind, nothing could be more engaging

gaging than the friendſhip of a man of ſenſe; and when the ſenſible friend is a lover too, of a genteel and polite addreſs, reſpectful even in the warmth of affection, and as fond as heart could wiſh, we cannot wonder at his ſucceſs.

The temple in the garden, which we have ſeveral times mentioned, was the uſual place of retirement for the happieſt of lovers; happieſt, I ſay, becauſe they were in the ſtate of expectation.

They ſpent many an hour here, converſing on the various delightful topics which virtuous love ſuggeſts; nor were books occaſionally excluded.

This beautiful little temple, ſacred to Honour and Love, had regular worſhip paid in it to theſe united deities, by the ſincereſt of their votaries, every afternoon, in the Doctor's abſence.

It was in the month of Auguſt, the weather ſultry, and every thing conduced to render this the moſt acceptable retirement

at ſuch a ſeaſon. Mr. Kingſley had put a volume of poems in his pocket; they read; they chatted; they diſcourſed of virtue; of the paſſions; of friendſhip; of Platonic love; and of love, not Platonic.

It was not unnatural for the paſſions to indulge themſelves, on ſuch an occaſion, in actions expreſſive of fondneſs; nor for thoſe expreſſive actions to increaſe the fervor of the paſſions. Mr. Kingſley, though virtuous in principle, though he loved with reverence, yet he was too much exhilarated, to be attentive to his own conduct. Though his manner carried an apology with it, when he tranſgreſſed, and love pleaded for him in the breaſt of his Maria; yet he went ſo far in his ſportive humour, as obliged her to be offended. Her anger confuſed and diſtreſſed him. He repented ſo ſtrongly, that ſhe found it neceſſary to be indulgent, in order to prove that ſhe forgave him. He was comforted—no—he was all rapture. It was but natural that he

ſhould

ſhould tranſgreſs again, and worſe than before. She rebuked his freedoms with ſobriety, and he ſoberly pleaded their innocence. They did not quarrel in this argument, but dropped it. "Oh, my "lovely Maria! when will the tedious "hours be flown over that prevent me "from calling you my own? My heart "ſinks at the thought of ſome intervening "accident, ſome change in your father's "mind. My aunt may offend him, and "he may be offended with me. Alas! "what a wretch ſhould I then be!"

"You would not be the only wretch," replied Maria.

"Heaven prevent it, my deareſt crea-"ture," ſaid the youth, "that any thing "ſhould make you wretched. But, alas! "this ſuſpenſe—theſe long months that "muſt paſs firſt."

They ſat ſilent for a time; his eyes expreſſed what his lips dared not utter. Maria underſtood their meaning, by the ſimple dictates of nature. He ſeized her hand,

and

and ſaluted it with too much ardor. She propoſed a walk in the gardens, but he urged that the heat was too great. They ſtaid where they were. The conflict raiſed in Mr. Kingſley's mind, between his virtue and his paſſions, was almoſt at an end. He had pleaded for innocent freedoms before, he found very *ready* arguments now in favour of his utmoſt wiſhes. They had often and often plighted their troth before the face of Heaven; of what conſequence were mere forms? Maria ſeemingly ſtarted with ſurpriſe at this reaſoning; ſhe reaſoned in reply to it, inſtead of leaving the bewitching ſpot. She was angry, ſhe wept: nor could the youth refrain from dropping a tear on her lovely face, while he attempted to wipe away hers with the lip of tender affection. She recovered from her diſtreſs, on his ſeeming to recover his reaſon. But, alas! how eaſily we deceive ourſelves!—Mr. Kingſley was ſeized with an unuſual gloom, which all

her little arts could not diſpel. He dropped a doubt of her love to him—Maria was grieved; ſhe was only conſcious of too much. She could not refrain from aſſurances, nor from tokens of it, that brought him to himſelf again, or rather, carried him again away in the flow of his paſſions. He could not be ſatisfied of the truth of it fully, while ſhe withſtood the *juſt* reaſonings he had urged before; and poor Maria was reduced to a freſh trial, with much leſs fortitude than ever. She was brought to the combat again, with diminiſhed forces.

During theſe critical minutes, the two deities, to whoſe union the temple was dedicated, were thrown into confuſion.—They had taken different ſides on the behalf of their votaries. *Honour* had exerted her utmoſt power for their preſervation, and Love pretended to aſſiſt her: But he was a traitor. He got full poſſeſſion alone of one heart, and Honour had only a corner left in the other. She ſaw herſelf ſlighted,

ſlighted, and deſerted: who, alone, could afford protection againſt the wily inſinuations of Love! She remained a long time maintaining an unequal fight, and, at laſt, was forced to retire reluctantly, and leave the field open to the enemy. The conqueror improved this victory, and took entire poſſeſſion of the heart which Honour had left vacant.

Dangerous and dreadful was the charming, the tender Maria's ſituation, now. Would the vows of any other man have had ſuch an effect on her heart, but too ſuſceptible of the ſofteſt emotions, the moſt bewitching paſſions? No, ſhe could not doubt the ſincerity of her beloved Charles: his words had ever borne the ſtamp of truth, his aſſeverations were the reſult of untainted honeſty. By the unbounded dependance ſhe had on him, the leſs ſhe had on herſelf; and even the good opinion ſhe entertained of his truth and morality, led her to the commiſſion of an immoral ac-

tion. This was not a time to reaſon. Her heart, long convinced of his good qualities, and how worthy he was to be loved, now only bore teſtimony in his behalf; and her heated imagination brightened the glowing colours. She fell—the lovely Maria fell, the victim of as pure a paſſion as ever burned in a female breaſt.

*Triumph* not in her fall, ye daughters of ſhame! Exult not in her ruin, ye whoſe feet are acquainted with the paths of iniquity! Long and ſevere was the conflict before ſhe was overcome; great and powerful was the temptation that drew her devious ſteps from the road of virtue. Her reaſon was lulled aſleep by the enchantments of paſſion; and uncontaminated was her mind, which conſented not to her guilt.

For the children of innocence and virtue, for the ſportive daughters of youth, for the guiltleſs and unexperienced maidens, whoſe hearts, warmed with the gentleſt of all

all paſſions, languiſh for the completion of their wiſhes, this picture is drawn and diſplayed; to them this leſſon is addreſſed. Hence let them learn that, to fly from an enemy they cannot reſiſt, is the only means to eſcape a defeat. To play on the brink of a precipice, is to ſport with danger: and to parley with a lover in the hour of fondneſs, is to provoke ruin. The arrogant heart, that contemns a foe, ſhall be humbled; but the caution of wiſdom will ſhun the unequal engagement. The pride of honour, the conſciouſneſs of virtue, and even the frozen veil of chaſtity, have been all found inſufficient to repel the aſſaults of love, unaſſiſted by PRUDENCE, unaided by DISCRETION.

Ye venerable, ye honoured dames, be ever preſent in the hour of danger, and guard the white-boſomed virgins of our affection in the moments of temptation. Let PRUDENCE take off the magic and fallacious maſque from the incitements of diſ-

honourable love, and ſhew the monſter in his proper hideous ſhape. Let the mild hand of DISCRETION moderate and repreſs the flame of deſire, and ſet bounds to the invaſions of unreſtrained inclination. So ſhall your days be bleſſed with peace, the beauteous and chaſte companions of your happy huſbands; ſo ſhall your matron honour be held in reverence, and your children boaſt of the virtues of their mothers.

Soon did this couple awake from their trance; ſoon did the deluſive miſts of paſſion vaniſh before the returning ray of reaſon, and their falſe happineſs fled them alſo. Maria, but too ſenſible of what had paſſed, and aſhamed of herſelf, broke from the arms of her lover, who yet held her to his throbbing breaſt. Her imagination repreſented to her, in the moſt ſtriking and forcible manner, her own crime, and the dreadful conſequences of it. While her heart yet panted with rapture, her eye was ſuffuſed with tears; and the murmurs of

love

love were ſtifled by the ſighs of agony and affliction—ſo cloſe do remorſe and repentance follow on the ſteps of guilt. Even in Kingſley's boſom all was not quiet. Conſcious of the part he had acted, the diſtreſs of his beloved Maria planted a dagger in his breaſt. Not her, for liſtening and yielding to his temptations, did he condemn; but himſelf, for offering them. He dreaded to look on himſelf in the light of a betrayer, yet his wounded conſcience told him that he was no better. He trembled to turn his eyes on what had paſſed, and ſincerely did he lament his own weakneſs, and want of reſolution to oppoſe the force of thoſe paſſions, which only ſerved to conduct him to miſery. But he had no time to indulge thoſe bitter reflections—The weeping Maria ſat by his ſide, and refuſed to be comforted. Not a tear did ſhe ſhed, but he reproached himſelf as the cauſe of it. Not a ſigh burſt from

her aching breaſt, that did not pierce his. He ſtrove, with the accents of the tendereſt love, to compoſe her, to reaſſure her with confidence, and convince her of his affection by the moſt ſolemn vows. The bluſhing Maria ſuffered herſelf to be perſuaded of his truth and ſincerity for her, which then it would have been madneſs and horror but to have formed a doubt of. They quitted the temple, and returned to the houſe, in a ſtate of uneaſineſs and trouble; where, to give her all the ſatisfaction in his power, he betrothed himſelf to her in the moſt ſolemn manner.

## BOOK III.

DR. Wakefield, on his return from his expedition to Warwickſhire, brought very agreeable news to Mr. Kingſley: he had

had ſucceeded with the old Lady to the utmoſt of his expectations.

It ſeems that Mrs. Parkington's prejudice againſt her brother, aroſe from his marrying a young woman of mean birth, and no fortune, by which her pride of family honour was ſo touched, that ſhe would never ſee him: and when misfortune trod on the heels of extravagance and reduced him conſiderably, ſhe was ſtill more embittered againſt him. But he had been dead ſeveral years; and when the Doctor viſited her, every thing contributed to give him ſucceſs: his appearance was reſpectable, his converſation very polite and agreeable, and the propoſals he made were generous. "He would give with his daughter, four "thouſand pounds on the day of marriage, "and leave her all he had; if Mrs. Par-"kington would only advance the young "gentleman two thouſand pounds, and "conſider him in her will in proportion to "his good behaviour.

She conſented to more than this; ſhe would equal his daughter's fortune: and as Mr. Kingſley was her only near relation, ſhe propoſed, upon the very favourable repreſentation the Doctor made of him, to leave him reſiduary legatee, after a few inconſiderable legacies.

This happy turn in Mr. Kingſley's favour, no doubt gave him great pleaſure. It alſo added a little to the ſatisfaction of Miſs Wakefield. But their happineſs now, had no little alloy. Honour, ſlighted as ſhe had been, could not forſake her proper reſidence in the breaſt of the lovely Maria; but took ample revenge there for the affront that had been put upon her: and if it had not been for the friendly conſolations which the rival deity adminiſtred, that breaſt had ſuffered too much to be borne.

In plain terms, Miſs Wakefield was truly uneaſy in the reflections on her own imprudence: nor could any thing have conſoled

ſoled her, but the faithful affection which appeared in every word and action of Mr. Kingſley. He was indeed leſs happy himſelf than he had been, but not leſs fond; and relieved the dejected Maria, by the reſpect and delicacy of his behaviour, from the painful reproaches of her heart, which had not now that ſelf-complacence that ariſes from conſcious virtue. They were indeed, undoubtedly, married in the ſight of God; but it is the duty of genuine virtue to conform to the juſt and reaſonable inſtitutions of men: nor could a mind like Mr. Kingſley's, be inſenſible of one circumſtance, which involved him in real guilt; viz. That the paſſions which had overcome him, would have had the like ſucceſs in any other caſe, and it is probable would have even drawn him into murder and adultery had the accidents been the ſame.

Miſs Wakefield had a few days leiſure to calm her mind before her father's arrival:

ſo that her countenance did not betray any ſecret to him: but, with her full approbation, Mr. Kingſley now urged the Doctor for his conſent to their ſpeedy union. He at length complied, and every thing was put in forwardneſs for their receiving the ſacred ſanction to their loves, in a month's time.

While theſe preparations were making, to the great relief of Miſs Wakefield, Mr. Kingſley, attended by a ſervant of the Doctor's, went to pay a viſit to his aunt, who received him at firſt with ceremony: but his graceful figure, his reſpectful deportment, and a livelineſs of converſation in which he excelled, ſoon opened him a paſſage to the old Lady's heart, and ſhe gave him very cordial aſſurances of her friendſhip. He ſtaid three days with her, impatient to return to the ſole object of all his affections, who counted the minutes of his abſence with an anxious heart.

Three

Three weeks of the appointed month were worn away, when Mr. Kingſley received a letter from his mother. She had reſided in Lancaſhire ever ſince the death of her huſband, and Mr. Kingſley had regularly correſponded with her, although we did not think it proper to introduce her to the reader till now.

He had made her long ago acquainted with his happy connections and favourable proſpects: and ſhe ſubmitted to his own prudence and diſcretion every thing concerning them. Mr. Kingſley had left her in no very proſperous circumſtances. But he had left her a *ſon*. Young Kingſley had been ſupported in his education, partly by his father's care, and partly by Doctor Wakefield himſelf; who was, as before mentioned, a friend to the family. Charles was a frequent viſitor at the Doctor's in thoſe early days, and an intimate companion of that ſon, whom Doctor Wakefield loved

loved extravagantly, and loſt, as before related: and ever after he had the affection of a father for young Kingſley.

To this was owing the partiality for him that muſt have appeared ſtrange to the reader, while he knew him only as the Doctor's curate. The income of this curacy was fifty pounds per annum. Now if the Doctor had a very warm friendſhip for Mr. Kingſley, when he made him this proviſion, we may ſuppoſe it was not leſſened by a diſcovery he accidentally made, after the young gentleman had enjoyed it two years: which was, that twenty five of this fifty pounds regularly went into Lancaſhire, for the more comfortable ſupport of his poor mother. Such filial duty and affection, gave him the higheſt place in Doctor Wakefield's eſteem, of any man he knew: and pointed him out to his thoughts as a much happier match for his daughter, than the firſt nobleman in the kingdom, if

poſ-

poſſeſſed of the common principles of modern life.

The letter Mr. Kingſley had from his mother, acquainted him with her being in a very bad ſtate of health; that ſhe was thought to be in ſome danger; that Mr. Willoughby, her landlord, had given her warning to quit his houſe, and threatened her with a diſtreſs for ſome arrears of rent, which ſhe had not yet been able to pay. She entreated him to come over, if poſſible, though it were but for a little time, to try what might be done to prevent this additional affliction.

This was no ſmall trial to the amiable couple: but upon Mr. Kingſley's ſhewing the Doctor his mother's letter, he would not ſuffer any thing to hinder his going immediately: and beſides bearing the expence of his journey, he furniſhed him very ſufficiently with the means of removing all his mother's difficulties: at the ſame time, he deſired, if Mrs. Kingſley ſhould

be

be better, and able to take the journey, ſhe might leave her houſe totally, and come back with her ſon; aſſuring her of a welcome recception in his family.

It was impoſſible for Miſs Wakefield to oppoſe this expedition with any decorum, if ſhe were ſo inclined: but we can apologize for her divided mind. Humanity and compaſſion reigned there: but the delay which this event would occaſion, and the peculiar reaſons ſhe had againſt any delay, raiſed a very painful conflict in her.

Mr. Kingſley had made a propoſal to have the ceremony performed before he went, but it was not ſo agreeable to the old gentleman's deliberate way of proceeding: and as he might return in a fortnight, it would make only a ſmall difference.

It was a very gloomy evening that the two anxious lovers ſpent together, before the morning of Mr. Kingſley's departure. The poſſibility of very fatal accidents happening in the courſe of ſo long a journey,

ney, was raiſed in Maria's foreboding heart to almoſt a certainty. She had no doubts of his fidelity and affection; but a thouſand fears for his ſafety, which were rendered the ſtronger, by reaſon of her apprehenſions for herſelf, in caſe any thing ſhould ſeparate them. He did his beſt to diſpel thoſe fears; aſſured her he would take the utmoſt care of himſelf for her ſake. At this time a thought came into his head, which, if executed, he imagined would tend to calm the anxious agitated mind of his beloved Maria. He propoſed it to her, and at his earneſt requeſt ſhe complied with it. He then took up a Prayer Book which lay before them on the table, (after calling in the faithful Peggy to be a witneſs) and in form went through the whole marriage ceremony, each in turn repeating the reſponſes: nor did he forget to place the ring on her finger as directed in the rubrick. When this was over, he ſaluted her his eternally beloved wife; and with the utmoſt tenderneſs beſought her

on

on his account to compoſe her mind, with a reliance on Divine Providence.

She loved him too well to be gratified by ſeeing him uneaſy, and they took leave of each other over-night with an aſſumed chearfulneſs on each ſide, that required no little art to put on, and much more philoſophy to realize.

The firſt week of Mr. Kingſley's abſence, her whole conſolation aroſe from the three letters ſhe received from him, and the hopes of ſeeing him in eight days from the end of it. Her anxiety for his return could only be increaſed by her melancholy apprehenſions of betraying, in a natural way, the conſequences of her indiſcretion. A thouſand diſtreſſing fears ſeized her, and *they* were doubled when the poſt failed to bring her an expected letter, four days after the laſt ſhe had.

The old gentleman obſerved her trouble, and comforted her as well as he could. "To-morrow ſhe might hear from him;

"it

"it was no uncommon thing for letters "to miſcarry." To-morrow came, but only to increaſe Maria's anxiety. The next day exchanged that anxiety for perfect anguiſh.

It might perhaps be a kindneſs to our tender-hearted readers to drop this ſtory here; but painful as ſcenes of woe may be, they are ſometimes more uſeful to us than even *the merry heart which doth good like a medicine.*

Mr. Kingſley did not write, nor did he return at the expected time.

It is impoſſible to conceive what paſſed in Miſs Wakefield's breaſt. She could not ſuppoſe that any thing but death had prevented him, and this thought left very little life in her. Her fond father could not any longer aſſiſt her by favourable conjectures: but was himſelf apprehenſive of ſome very fatal accident. A few days diſtreſs, ſuch as the young lady endured, were enough to have injured a much

much ſtronger conſtitution: ſhe ſunk under it, and was confined to her bed with a fever, which had her ſuſpenſe continued might have coſt her life: but ſhe was relieved by certainty, melancholy as it was.

During Miſs Wakefield's illneſs, as her father was ſitting by her bed-ſide adminiſtering every conſolation in his power to her afflicted heart, he was called out by the maid ſervant, who informed him that John was come back. This was the man who had attended Mr. Kingſley on his journey, and had lived many years in the family.

The Doctor went down, and ordering John into the parlour, began his enquiries after Mr. Kingſley.

"O Sir," ſaid John, "have you never "received the letter I wrote?"

"No John."

"I have

"I have a melancholy ſtory to tell you "then, Sir: and I hardly know where to "begin.

"But — Where did you leave Mr. "Kingſley? Is he coming?"

"Oh, Sir," replied John, the tears flowing faſt down his cheeks, "my worthy "young maſter will never come any "more."

"What! he is not dead, John! Is he?"

"It is too true, Sir; indeed he is: I "was by him to the laſt minute."

"Thy will be done, Father of Mercy," cried the old gentleman, lifting up both his hands to heaven. "But what will be-"come of my poor child!"

He wept at the thought of her ſufferings; but compoſing himſelf, deſired to have a circumſtantial account of every thing.

"My young maſter wrote to you, Sir, "I ſuppoſe about our journey to his mo-"ther's, and that the Lady was not well "enough

" enough to think of coming back with
" us; but as ſhe was not worſe, ſhe did
" hope to come ſoon. But when ſhe knew
" that my young maſter had put off the
" marriage to come to ſee her, ſhe was
" uneaſy at it, and would not have him
" ſtay with her above three or four days
" on any account. So, after he had ſet-
" tled his affairs, and ſtaid till ſhe almoſt
" forced him away, we ſet out on our re-
" turn home. We met with no accident
" the firſt day, though it is a very rough
" ugly country about the weſt ſide of
" Yorkſhire: but the next afternoon,
" when we were got as far as Leeds, about
" duſk, my maſter had refreſhed himſelf
" a little, and reſolved to get forward
" another ſtage that night; though we
" had rode fifty miles at leaſt. I would
" fain have perſuaded him to ſtay; but
" he was in a very great hurry to get
" home, and would go at all adventures.
" So, Sir, we ſet out when it was almoſt
" dark

"dark, and there was no moon, and the "weather very foul. My maſter rode "pretty faſt; and whether his horſe ſtart-"ed at any thing, or ſtumbled, I could "not tell; but I found a ſudden ſtop, and "heard him cry out, I ſuppoſe as he fell; "for I jumped off my horſe immediately, "and found him on the ground not able "to move or ſpeak. O, Sir, nobody can "think what miſery I felt at that mo-"ment: I knew not what to do. I en-"deavoured to lift him up, but he was "like a dead corpſe for weight. How-"ever, with ſome difficulty, I removed "him to the ſide of the road; and finding "ſome ſigns of life about him, I rubbed "his face from the dirt, and endeavour-"ed to get ſome water in my hat to give "him to drink. At length he came a lit-"tle to himſelf, and was only juſt able "to ſay, 'Get me to ſome houſe.'

"I looked all about very earneſtly to "ſee if I could perceive any light, but

"there

" there was only one at a great diſtance
" acroſs the fields: and juſt then I heard
" ſome horſes on the road, and they ſoon
" came up. I intreated the people to ſtop
" and help me. They told me of a little
" public houſe not far off on the road,
" and very kindly aſſiſted me to carry him
" to it. He complained of his head, which
" appeared to be very much hurt, and
" bled a great deal. There was no ſur-
" geon to be had nearer than Leeds: ſo
" I got one of the men to go there imme-
" diately and bring the beſt ſurgeon he
" could meet with. He returned with
" one in a little more than two hours and
" a half. When he examined his head,
" he looked very blank: and after he had
" done what he thought needful, calling
" me out of the room, told me, that my
" maſter was in a great deal of danger by
" the fracture in his ſkull; and aſking me
" his name and where he lived, adviſed me
" if poſſible to ſend to his friends imme-
" diately,

"diately, though it was very doubtful "whether he could live till they arrived. "He ordered him to be kept very quiet, "and not let him ſpeak much if he ſhould "think himſelf able.

"I deſired him to give all the attendance "in his power, and aſſured him he would "be ſatisfied for any trouble he took. He "promiſed to return very early in the morn- "ing, and ſtaid till I had got a pen, ink, "and paper, and wrote a few lines to "you, Sir; but I find you never re- "ceived them: and indeed I was ſurpriſed "that I neither ſaw nor heard any thing from "you; but I ſuppoſe in my confuſion I "made ſome miſtake in the direction.

"I ſat up with Mr. Kingſley all night: "he was in great pain, had no reſt, and "talked a great deal to himſelf for all "that I could do to prevent him. When "the ſurgeon came in the morning, he "told me he had no hopes of him; that "he would not live four and twenty

" hours more. I was full of grief and
" diſtreſs. He lay more compoſed for
" the moſt part of the day, but was very
" bad in the evening: he talked about
" you and my young Lady with ſuch ear-
" neſtneſs—that I was ſure he was not to
" be kept alive if quietneſs was neceſſary
" for him. About ten o'clock he grew
" more calm, but complained of his head;
" He called to me a little after, and told
" me he knew he ſhould die, and very
" quietly gave me directions what to do.
" When he had laid very ſtill for near an
" hour after this, he jumped ſuddenly up
" in bed, crying out, 'O Maria, my
'loved, my loſt Maria,' and then ſunk
" down again as lifeleſs as a ſtone.

" When I ſaw that all was over, I could
" not ſtir for grief. The people of the
" houſe dragged me out of the room, and
" perſuaded me to get a few hours reſt
" which I endeavoured to do; but ſoon
" got up again.

" My

"My maſter had deſired that I would "ſee him buried at Leeds, and leave it "to you to write to his mother, and that "I ſhould go home as ſoon as I could af- "terwards. I had ſecured his money at "his firſt being put to bed, but found "there was not like to be enough to pay "all expences, without great frugality. I "went over to Leeds to the ſurgeon, who "adviſed me as to the circumſtances of "his funeral: and as to himſelf he would "take nothing of me. This left me "enough for all the other purpoſes: and "after I had paid the laſt duties to my "dear young maſter, I ſet out with the "horſes to come home."

The Doctor attended to John's melancholy ſtory without interrupting him, and ſat a long while ſilent after he had finiſhed. He had known affliction before, but never felt more than at preſent. He loved Mr. Kingſley very much, but his daughter was now his chief concern. Whe-

ther to communicate the dreadful tidings to her or not was a great perplexity to him. But when he had duly weighed this in his mind, he determined with as much caution and tenderneſs as poſſible to inform her of Mr. Kingſley's death.

When the Doctor went up again to ſee his daughter, he found her doſing; and therefore, leaving orders to be called when ſhe awoke, he retired to his ſtudy; where he gave free vent to the diſtreſs of his mind, in very fervent ſupplicationsto the divine Being for himſelf and his child. When he was informed of her being awake, and deſiring to ſee him, he went immediately to her chamber; and finding her very compoſed, thought it would be wiſeſt to ſay nothing on the afflicting ſubject, unleſs ſhe was herſelf to revive it.

She ſoon enquired of him, whether he had heard any thing yet. He continued ſilent for a time, not ſeeming to regard her queſtion. "Then he is dead!" ſaid ſhe.

"I

"I thought ſo from the firſt; for he could "not, he would not, deſert me, if he "were living.

"Compoſe yourſelf, my love," ſaid her father; "you will be the worſe for think- "ing on this ſubject: when you get a little "better, we will talk about it."

"Oh father!" ſaid ſhe, "I cannot help "thinking on it: but I am much more "compoſed than I was; and ſhall not be "worſe, if you tell me all. I am ſure "you know ſomething about him: do "tell me all. I have given him up: I "am reſigned. But what have you heard, "Sir?"

"Can you, my Maria, ſubmit calmly "to the will of our eternal Sovereign; "even ſuppoſing that will ſhould be to ſe- "parate you; and that he has called Mr. "Kingſley to greater bleſſedneſs than any "on earth? May God Almighty comfort "you, my child! it is beyond my power."

She fainted, and was long before ſhe re-

covered. The old man wept compaſſionately over her; and his tears of love were balm to her heart. She was, indeed, ſhocked on the tranſition from ſuſpicion to certainty. But her grief had vented itſelf already; and ſhe turned comforter to her afflicted father.

Not to confine the reader too long in the chamber of the afflicted, it will be ſufficient to inform him, that Miſs Wakefield's fever, though it grew worſe for two days after this, yet in about a fortnight ſhe was ſo well recovered, as to ſit up the greateſt part of the day, to the great comfort of her father.

But her grief had food which he knew not of.

Poor Maria had even entertained hopes, on a confirmation of her worſt apprehenſions, that her illneſs would befriend her, in ſecreting for ever the fatal effects of her unwatchful love. But this was not to be: And ſhe had no other proſpect of concealing

ceaſing them, but that her great weakneſs ſeemed to promiſe a full releaſe from all her troubles in a few months.

The faithful Peggy Janſon, who was now become Mrs. Rigby, in the arms of her huſband loſt nothing of her affection for her miſtreſs. She heard of her illneſs, and attended her during the continuance of it with a care and attention that demonſtrated her regard. Frequently did ſhe endeavour to diſſipate the gloom that hung over Maria's ſpirits, and which was viſible in every action and look.

The young Lady, at length, gave vent to her diſtreſs, and informed her of her condition. The recollection of paſt ſcenes, when ſhe ventured to unburthen her heart of this painful ſecret, greatly oppreſſed her; but yet ſhe was eaſier on having a faithful friend to adviſe with. Mrs. Rigby comforted her as much as ſhe could; aſſuring her, that ſhe would find ſome means,

if poſſible, to have her ſecret kept from all the world but themſelves.

"I do not know," ſaid Maria, "what "can poſſibly be done: but, if I thought "my dear father would not be more diſ-"treſſed at it than he has been already, "and that he would not deſpiſe and hate "me; I could almoſt wiſh that he knew "it: His advice muſt be of the utmoſt "ſervice."

Mrs. Rigby rather diverted her from thinking of this: But revolving it afterwards in her mind, ſhe concluded, that there could be no danger of her father's anger, in this critical ſtate of his daughter's health: and as to its giving him freſh diſtreſs, ſhe had ſo high an opinion of his fortitude and patience, that ſhe reſolved to venture on informing him, though with proper caution, of the whole affair, without letting Miſs Wakefield feel any pain of ſuſpenſe by knowing her intention.

Accord-

Accordingly ſhe took the firſt opportunity of ſpeaking to him; very prudently introducing her ſtory with ſome affectionate praiſes of her young Lady's virtue and patience; lamenting her very weak ſtate of health, and fears leſt ſhe ſhould go into a decline. Theſe were circumſtances that brought up all the good doctor's affections to her aſſiſtance; and he was in the beſt diſpoſition imaginable, when Mrs. Rigby told him, there was one unhappy circumſtance which greatly endangered the young Lady while it lay working in her mind; as ſhe was afraid and aſhamed he ſhould know it; but that it was better to break it to him at once. The mention of ſhame led the old man at once into the ſecret; and, in a moment, he reflected on his own imprudence, in putting two young people into ſuch a temptation. He was more confirmed in this ſelf-blame, on hearing all the particulars: and, though he could not but be diſpleaſed at the impro-

priety of their behaviour, and would have been full of indignation, had Mr. Kingſley been living; yet now his heart was ſoftened, and he conſulted with great patience and tenderneſs what could beſt be done for his daughter's comfort and her reputation.

However, he was rejoiced to hear that the ceremony of the church had been attended to; which he thought mended the matter greatly, and the more eſpecially, as being read by a perſon in holy orders.

Mrs. Rigby made a propoſal which greatly pleaſed the old gentleman: it was this; that as her huſband had found it neceſſary to leave their little cottage, and had ſo advantageous an offer with Mr. Turnbull, they would retire, if the Doctor pleaſed, to Northamptonſhire; and Miſs Wakefield might, without any ſuſpicion, viſit them for change of air and variety: and when ſhe ſhould be brought to bed, if he approved of it, ſhe would undertake

the care of the child; and it ſhould be called by her own name.

This ſcheme, with ſome improvements, was determined on: and Mrs. Rigby now begged one favour of the doctor; which was, that he would ſave his daughter ſome of the ſhame and vexation of appearing as a criminal in his eyes, by viſiting her now, and comforting her himſelf with aſſurances of his compaſſion and love for her, at the very time when he ſhould diſcover that he knew all.

This the old gentleman complied with in a way that did more honour to his paternal humanity, than any rigid anger could have done to his virtue; and it was the means that contributed more than any other to reſtore Miſs Wakefield to health, and to ſome peace of mind.

Nevertheleſs, the various ſcenes which ſhe had once beheld with ſo much delight, became now the melancholy remembrancers of her unhappineſs. The

well-intended viſits of conſolation from their reſpectable neighbourhood, were burthenſome and painful; and, beſides this, it would ſoon become neceſſary for her to retire. The Doctor, therefore, very conſiderately, propoſed to ſpend the winter in London, and, for that purpoſe, ſent honeſt John thither, with a commiſſion to look for a neat ſmall houſe, ready furniſhed, in ſome private ſtreet at the weſt end of the town. John ſucceeded to his maſter's wiſh, and, in three months after the unfortunate accident, they ſet out for London.

Mr. Rigby removed to a part of Northamptonſhire, about thirty miles diſtant, and was furniſhed, partly at the Doctor's expence, with a little, convenient houſe, in a private part of the country; and, in a ſhort time, Miſs Wakefield removed from London, to Mr. Rigby's.

Now it happened very favourably for Miſs Wakefield, that Mrs. Rigby herſelf had

had lain in a month before her viſitor came, and was prepared to nurſe both boys at once. The midwife had been properly inſtructed with a ſtory concerning the young lady, as near the truth as poſſible, with this only addition, of Mr. Kingſley having been privately married to her, againſt the conſent of his aunt. But ſhe went not in the name of Kingſley, but in that of Rigby, as a relation of Mr. Rigby's.

Every thing was ſnug and ſecret. A charming boy, the very image of his father, revived a thouſand ideas of him in her mind, and became the object of her fondeſt affection. She ſtaid two months; and then, with the moſt painful reluctance, ſeparated herſelf from the dear pledge of her moſt unfortunate love. But Prudence required it, as the ſacrifice of atonement for the offence committed againſt her honour.

A few

A few months after Miſs Wakefield's return home, Mrs. Rigby had the misfortune to loſe her own little boy, and had then no other care than little Tommy, who thrived exceedingly. She kept up a regular correſpondence with her young lady, although with caution as to any expreſſions that might diſcover a ſecret ſo important to Miſs Wakefield, in caſe a letter ſhould miſcarry.

Her huſband had got a recommendation to 'Squire Turnbull, with whom he worked in his profeſſion; and beſides his income here, Dr. Wakefield had ſettled a very pretty annuity on them for both their lives, in compenſation for the care and trouble they would have, as parents of his little grandſon. The old gentleman ſeveral times paid a viſit to them, along with his daughter, as ſecretly as could be, and made them many handſome preſents at each of theſe viſits. Mr. and Mrs. Rigby were ſufficiently engaged to their intereſt already,

already, by the remembrance of the happy days they had ſpent in the Doctor's family; but ſo much kindneſs and reſpect as was now paid them, ſerved to confirm them in their fidelity.

It was by means of her huſband's reſidence in Mr. Turnbull's family, that Mrs. Rigby became acquainted with Mrs. Wilkins, of whoſe marriage, and removal into Berkſhire, we have already ſpoken. The reader has alſo been informed that Mrs. Rigby became a widow, by her huſband being ſeized with a violent fever, two years after the birth of her adopted ſon. Doctor Wakefield, who was much advanced in years, paid the debt of nature about ſix months before Rigby's deceaſe, and left his daughter poſſeſſed of all his fortune, which was not inconſiderable.

*Miſs Wakefield* felt this affliction of her father's death very ſincerely; but ſhe had been before in the ſchool of adverſity. Her chief attention, for the laſt two years, had

had been to alleviate the burthen of her father's infirmities; during which time they lived very recluſe. Immediately upon his death, ſhe began to deliberate on a ſcheme of leaving that neighbourhood, and retiring to ſome diſtant part of the kingdom, if ſhe could prevail with Mrs. Rigby to accompany her. For it was her great ambition, if it could be done without raiſing any ſurmiſes, to have the dear little fellow always under her notice, that ſhe might give the utmoſt attention to his education. But ſome material circumſtances aroſe, to divert her mind from this project.

Mrs. Rigby, with whom ſhe conſulted upon it, in a viſit ſhe made her ſoon after this event, earneſtly diſſuaded her from it, as it would have an extraordinary appearance, for her, without any viſible inducement, to leave her eſtate to the management of ſtrangers, and retire to any diſtant part; and, if they ever were diſcovered by perſons who knew her, a very diſagreeable

greeable *explanation* of the cauſe of this retirement might be brought out. Miſs Wakefield was, therefore, perſuaded to lay aſide the thoughts of removing, from theſe, and ſome other prudent conſiderations. But as we are come now to the period at which we began to relate her hiſtory, we ſhall beg of the reader to accompany us to farmer Wilkins's new habitation in Berkſhire, whither, as we mentioned before, ſhe frequently went.

Miſs Wakefield ſtill had a great deſire to quit that part of the country where her father reſided, leſt by any means her unhappy connexion with Mr. Kingſley might have been diſcovered. Though that was next to an impoſſibility, yet ſhe never was the leſs fearful and anxious. Conſcious herſelf of having tranſgreſſed, ſhe had not as yet aſſumed confidence enough to ſuppoſe that the reſt of the world had looked on her as innocent. She therefore wiſhed to go to ſome other place where ſhe was a

ſtranger.

ſtranger. An opportunity, favourable to her wiſhes, now offered itſelf. A gentleman, from Suffolk, whom ſhe had accidentally become acquainted with ſoon after her father's death, was pleaſed with her; and, having paid his addreſſes to her, ſhe ſeemed inclinable to accept his hand. But, before ſhe would alter her condition, ſhe determined to ſettle her ſon, and make him independent of her if ſhe lived: And from that time never to ſee, or acknowledge him as her ſon. The ſecret of his birth was known to ſo few, that it could never, with any probability, come to her future huſband's ears; and ſhe reſolved, at once, to bury her own ſhame, and, if poſſible, the remembrance of it, by entirely relinquiſhing him to the care of Mrs. Rigby, who determined never to marry, and on whoſe affection for him ſhe could ſafely rely.

This then was the cauſe of the many private conferences which the two women had

had together; but not being able to accompliſh the deſign of themſelves, the widow, who had the greateſt opinion of farmer Wilkins's good ſenſe and prudence, propoſed it to Miſs Wakefield, to acquaint him with the whole ſtory, and to aſk his advice.

With great reluctance ſhe conſented to this: and after making Wilkins and his wife promiſe ſecrecy in the moſt ſolemn manner, Mrs. Rigby acquainted them with that hiſtory, which, in our own mode and ſtile, we have already delivered to the reader.

When the farmer heard what Miſs Wakefield wanted, he offered all the aſſiſtance in his power; and going to conſult with a lawyer, every thing was properly adjuſted. Two hundred pounds a year were ſettled upon Thomas Rigby and his heirs for ever, when he arrived at twenty-one; and John Wilkins, with a neighbour, were truſtees.

This

This grand point being determined, ſhe became a joyful bride, and went with her huſband into Suffolk, where ſhe was free from all thoſe apprehenſions which uſed frequently to torment her at home. She had ſettled every thing to her wiſh, and her heart rejoiced in her fancied ſecurity. But while we think we tread in ſafety, the adder ſtings us; and in the midſt of our air-built notions of happineſs, ruin and deſtruction overtake us. We arm ourſelves, and make the way plain for them: yet the ſhield of integrity ſhall blunt the arrows of misfortune, and the conſciouſneſs of virtue ſhall dull the edge of ſorrow.

## BOOK IV.

LITTLE Tommy was now entirely left to the care of Mrs. Rigby, who, on every occaſion, behaved as tenderly to him

him as his own mother could do. She was a real mother to him, for he knew none other. Mrs. Rigby could not entirely approve the conduct of his mother; this total dereliction of her child ſhe did not like, though ſhe had a good ſettlement by it; and though ſhe had cauſe to be aſhamed of the crime that cauſed his exiſtence, ſhe thought he ſhould not be relinquiſhed for ever. He was ſtill her child, and by a man whom ſhe truly loved: and the widow could not conceive how ſhe could form and execute the reſolution of never ſeeing him again. But the boy was more endeared to her by this treatment, and he repaid her kindneſs by the tendereſt affection.

Within a ſhort time after Mr. Wilkins's removal into Berkſhire, his wife was brought to bed of a daughter; and the next year ſhe crown'd his wiſhes by preſenting him a ſon; and, in two years after that, ſhe had another daughter.

Mrs.

Mrs. R[illegible]was far from being a uſeleſs branch of the family, and, being very fond of children, rendered herſelf extremely ſerviceable to Mrs. ~~Rigby~~ Wilkins in the care of hers. Happily for Tommy, whom we ſhall, upon all future occaſions, ſtile Rigby, there was a very worthy clergyman, near the farmer's, who kept a ſchool. When he was about nine years old he went under his care, and his infancy paſſed away like that of other children. As he attained his twelfth year, his reaſon began to expand itſelf a little, and he gave ſome inſight into his temper and diſpoſition. He was bold and daring, quick and impetuous; awed more by fear of ſhame than puniſhment; haughty to thoſe above him, but gentle and kind to thoſe who were in his power; grateful to an exceſs for any favour conferred, but an injury he never forgot: generous as light, and open as the day, every thing he had was at the ſervice of his companions; but the moment he found one of them guilty of

of a mean or baſe action, him he ever after avoided, and never could be reconciled to him. Ingenuous in his manner, his round and ruddy face was but the index of his mind; and his fine blue eyes, ſpoke the tenderneſs of his heart, which was full of compaſſion. Theſe were the outlines of his temper when a boy, and they were but very little altered when he arrived at manhood. It may here be objected, that it was next to an impoſſibility to find out a child's character: this may be a general rule, but he was an exception to it. Some children develop themſelves ſooner than others; and it has been ſomewhere remarked, that the female underſtanding ripens much ſooner than the male, and yet, even among girls, ſome are more forward than others.

This temper of young Rigby's led him into many ſcrapes. In all ſervices of danger, whether robbing an orchard, which he conſidered as lawful prey, or any other grand enterpriſe of the like nature, he was

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ſtill the foremoſt, and the honour more than the profit allured him. He was always the friend of the oppreſſed, and when he got a little ſtrength was the common protector of the leſſer boys; this engaged him in many combats with thoſe whoſe power he oppoſed, and, in a ſhort time, he found but few equals, and they declined any engagements with him: it is true, in theſe contentions he frequently brought off a bloody noſe and black eyes, but he gained his point. His maſter had a great affection for him, and as he was very attentive to his inſtructions, overlooked ſome peccadilloes in him, that he would have puniſhed in any other boy. One inſtance in which he could not forgive him was this: from the character we have given of Tom, it muſt be ſuppoſed that he was of a ſocial temper, and made ſeveral of thoſe boyiſh attachments which frequently however laſt through life, though built on ſo ſlender a foundation. Tom was as ſincere

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in his friendſhip as violent in his enmity. Two boys, who were his particular friends, engaged him one day at play beyond the ſchool hour, and when they found themſelves rather late, made an agreement to ſtick to an excuſe they framed, which would ſave them from puniſhment. Upon their examination they all adhered in a body to the ſtory; but the maſter, doubting the truth of their aſſertions, examined them ſeparately: the two boys told the truth: Tom was the laſt called into the room where this ſcrutiny was held, and he ſtill perſiſted in the firſt ſtory he had told. Threats of puniſhment or promiſes of reward had no effect upon him. At laſt the ſchoolmaſter upbraided him for his obſtinacy, and his perverſeneſs in adhering to a falſehood; and then told him what his companions had diſcovered. "Well, Sir," ſaid the boy, "they have told you truth, "but it was a mutual agreement to ſave "ourſelves. I was true and faithful to

"them; I have told but one lye, they "have told two, for they broke their pro- "miſe to me. I think they ſhould be pu- "niſhed, and not me." However the maſter's heart might aſſent to the truth of this obſervation, he could not comply with it, and Rigby was puniſhed; but he had the pleaſure to ſee his perfidious companions deſpiſed by the reſt of the boys, who frequently have more virtue than men, and are more earneſt in ſhewing it.

Tom's humanity was alſo conſpicuous in a little time after. A few fields from the farm houſe ſtood the church: and adjoining to the church-yard, which lay high, was a cottage, the upper window of which was almoſt level with the ground on that ſide; the door-way opened on the other to a little common. This cottage lay in Tom's daily path-way to ſchool: and as the little window before mentioned had often afforded him boyiſh diverſion, ſo it had lately introduced him to an acquaint-

ance

ance with the family, conſiſting of a poor woman with five young children. Peeping in one winter's morning as he was going by, he obſerved the young children crying, and heard the mother telling them that ſhe had no bread to give them. Tom's ſatchel was generally well ſupplied with bread and butter, or cheeſe, for his breakfaſt, as the ſchool was at too great a diſtance for him to go home regularly to his meals. The firſt thought that ſuggeſted itſelf to him was that of dividing his food amongſt them, which he accordingly did directly; and promiſed them that they ſhould have more victuals ſoon. Accordingly in the afternoon he told this ſtory to his mother and farmer Wilkins, who ſupplied the poor woman with many things, and enabled her and the family to live much more comfortably than they could poſſibly do upon the pariſh allowance. Tom frequently called in to ſee them, and never went empty handed. The Chriſt-

mas holidays, which ſoon ſucceeded to this adventure, enriched Tom by the bounty of his mother and his friends. This money he appropriated in his own mind to the uſe of his family in the cottage: and in the morning he ſet out with an intention of giving it to them, though the ſnow had fallen in great quantities all the night, and was remarkably deep on the ground. Tom, though almoſt up to his knees, found his way to the cottage: but when he got there he was worſe off than before, for by the drift of ſnow the door was entirely blocked up, and the houſe almoſt buried. This was a dreadful ſight to Tom: however, he went round by the church-yard to the window, and bade them be eaſy, for he would go and bring them relief, in which he was as good as his word; for the farmer ſent two of his men with Tom, who carried them ſome victuals, and ſoon made a paſſage for them at the door: and all

all the time he remained in that country he continued their friend.

In every little act of beneficence in his power, Tom exerciſed his youthful days. As the widow Rigby's ſon, he was the companion of all the young people on the green near which they lived. His good nature and affability moderated the haſtineſs of his temper, and made him beloved by the young men; and he cauſed many a ſigh to be uttered from the very innocent boſoms of the country girls. He joined in every exerciſe with the lads and laſſes. He was as active as any one of his age at wreſtling, leaping, or running: his dexterity at cricket generally enſured victory to his party. He had acquired ſome knowledge of dancing from a maſter who taught at the ſchool: and this, though ſlender, added to the natural grace of his perſon, made him very agreeable to the girls in their rural dances, which would

not have been complete without Tom Rigby.

He had now attained fifteen: and Mrs. Rigby, who really felt all the fondneſs of a mother for a child thus totally relinquiſhed to her care, began to adviſe with her friend Wilkins concerning the lad's future ſettlement in life. They both agreed that he ſhould be put out to ſome genteel trade, as it was high time for him to go into the world. This pleaſed Mrs. Rigby, and was the ſubject of frequent converſations between her and the farmer. One day Mr. Waters, the ſchoolmaſter with whom Tom had been bred, calling in at the farmer's to aſk Mrs. Rigby and the family how they did, the widow ſtarted the ſubject, and aſked him his opinion about the diſpoſal of Tommy; telling him at the ſame time what he had to depend on. Mr. Waters, who loved the boy, thought it a pity that he ſhould be put to trade, when the brightneſs of his parts, and his

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ſolid underſtanding, when properly improved, might ſet him in a very exalted ſphere in life. He therefore told Mrs. Rigby, that though he was ſenſible ſhe had a right to diſpoſe of her ſon as ſhe pleaſed, yet as his opinion was aſked, he could not help lamenting her determination to put him into trade, as he had a great notion that he was calculated for a much higher ſituation; that he had made great improvements under him, and was then qualified for the univerſity, if his youth did not render it prudent to keep him for another year or two at home; that he might then chuſe what profeſſion he would adhere to; and concluded with ſaying, that he eſteemed it wrong to bury talents, ſuch as his were, in buſineſs, when they might appear with ſo much better advantage in another ſituation; and if they choſe to ſend him to college, he had a particular friend at Cambridge to whom he would recommend Tom, and who

would take the greateſt care of him. This propoſal pleaſed Mrs. Rigby; and the praiſe which Mr. Waters beſtowed on the boy, was the moſt agreeable and flattering compliment that could be paid to her. She told him that ſhe would conſider of it; but as ſhe had the greateſt deference to his opinion, was half inclined to follow his advice. Mr. Waters added every thing he thought moſt likely to induce her to conſent to ſend him to Cambridge, and departed.

Mrs. Rigby could not help conceiving a notion that Tom was born to cut a figure in life, and that it was her duty conſequently to forward him as much as poſſible; accordingly, having taken the advice of her privy councellor, Wilkins, ſhe determined to follow the directions of Mr. Waters, and this ſhe notified to him: after which he ſpared no pains in preparing his pupil for his intended courſe.

Tom,

Tom, whoſe young heart already throbbed with ambition, heard with pleaſure the deſign of ſending him to college; nothing gave him more uneaſineſs than the thoughts of being confined to a trade: but as that had been but juſt intimated to him, and the other diſtincton having taken place ſo ſoon after the firſt, he never expreſſed his diſlike to the former notion. Indeed, ſo great was his reſpect, and ſo much did he love Mrs. Rigby, whom he ſuppoſed, and with the greateſt reaſon, his mother, that he avoided giving her the ſlighteſt uneaſineſs. And ſhe, on the other hand, thought ſhe could not execute the truſt repoſed in her better than by putting the lad in the moſt likely way to raiſe himſelf in the world, in caſe his mother ſhould ever take it into her head to acknowledge him for her ſon. All parties were pleaſed, and the intervening time, between the propoſal and his going to Cambridge, ſeemed rather tedious in Tom's

eyes. However it arrived at laſt; and Mr. Waters, having ſome buſineſs that way, took Tom with him, and placed him under the care of his friend there. As Rigby had a ſincere affection for Mr. Waters, he paid a great attention to the advice he gave him regarding his future conduct and behaviour. He had every thing that he could wiſh for allowed him by the kindneſs of Mrs. Rigby; and he was entering into a new kind of life, that had every charm for a young man of ſo ſanguine a temper as he was: but he could not ſo ſoon forget the admonition of his good friend Mr. Waters, and he did not ſeem to reliſh the generality of his companions; therefore, he did not engage in many parties, and returned the next long vacation to his mother's in Berkſhire, with a very good character from the gentleman to whoſe care he had been committed, and a very doubtful one from his companions, who hardly knew what to make of him.

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The young gentleman was heartily pleaſed to ſee his friends at home again: his grateful heart throbbed with joy at meeting his mother; and Wilkins and his whole family were in their turns careſſed by him. They were not backward in welcoming him back again; and all was joy. His old friend Mr. Waters received him with great pleaſure, and congratulated him on the improvement he had made. His country friends thronged about him: and he diſtributed his kiſſes to the girls, and his ſhakes of the hand to the men who were his former companions, with great affability and good nature: not but he conceived himſelf of more importance than formerly, and his ſituation flattered his vanity; but he could not avoid recollecting his former days, and the preſent condition of his mother, and that he had heard ſome hints thrown out that his father was but low in the world. Theſe conſiderations, operating with his good ſenſe, prevented the ap-

proaches of pride, and kept him ſtill on the level with the companions of his youth. However he did not mix among them ſo much as he formerly had done, but divided his time between his books, his friend Waters, and his exerciſe.

In one of his walks, he had been tempted by the fineneſs of the evening to ſtray farther than uſual, and had got into a part of the country that he ſcarcely remembered. He ſtill walked on, and the novelty of the ſpot pleaſed him. It was above four years ſince he had been there before, and then only when he had been hunting. He accordingly reſolved to take a roundabout way home, that he might enjoy the proſpect. He had not proceeded far, before he ſtopped at the ſight of a little neat houſe that he never recollected to have ſeen before: it was divided from the road by ſome clear white paling; and a graſs-plat, ſurrounded by a border of flowers, lay before the houſe; two or three

little

little clumps of flowery ſhrubs filled up the intermediate ſpace, and the whole had ſuch an air of order and regularity, and ſuch an appearance of elegance, that he was extreamly ſurpriſed: he leaned upon the pole that he made the conſtant companion of his journies about the country, and ſtood in ſilent admiration, conjecturing what could be the cauſe of ſuch an appearance in ſo loneſome and deſerted a place.

Rigby from his conſtitution, and the heat of a youthful imagination, poſſeſſed a very romantic turn: he had alſo that ſtrange notion of honour, which, though it ſerves ſometimes to make a man ridiculous, frequently occaſions juſtice to be done to the injured and oppreſſed, and incites us to the moſt generous, benevolent actions, however uncommon. That conduct borders upon Quixotiſm, the world will tell you. It is generous and good, the humane will readily allow. The philoſopher weighs and praiſes the action in the cloſet. The warrior

rior finds it conſiſtent with his ideas of right: but bring any of them to the teſt, and they will all decline doing the like, becauſe it is none of their buſineſs. It has been obſerved, that ſince Cervantes, in the humorous romance of Don Quixote, expoſed and laughed at the madneſs of the Spaniſh gentlemen, and their fondneſs for ſeeking adventures, that the manners of that rank of men are leſs pure, their notions leſs refined, their honour leſs attended to than before; their ideas are not ſo elevated as formerly; and it is imagined, that he has done more harm than good by it. It was a folly, if you can call it one, almoſt inſeparable from the genius and diſpoſition of that people: but yet it ſupported the rights of humanity and juſtice, though the character of the actor might be rather *outrè* ſometimes. It belongs only to a ſanguine temper, and a generous heart, to conceive the dictates of diſintereſted honour,

nour, where they may chance to tread on danger.

Rigby was poſſeſſed of theſe, and an intrepidity equal to any thing he might attempt. His fertile imagination repreſented ſomething extraordinary, from the appearance of this little dwelling in ſo ſequeſtered a place. Many agreeable and enchanting ideas thronged all at once around him, and he thought himſelf in another land; when a ſhriek from a female voice, ſucceeded by another, awoke him from his reverie; and though naturally compaſſionate and humane, never was he more inclined to ſuccour and relieve diſtreſs than at that moment. With the help of his pole, he ſprung over the pales, and ran to the door of the houſe, which he knocked twice at, before it was opened.

The maid-ſervant, who came to the door, appeared in confuſion, and her face indicated terror and concern. She had never ſeen Rigby before, and knew not what

to

to do: he ſeemed equally at a loſs to explain the reaſon why he wanted admiſſion. He was ſoon relieved from this awkward ſituation, by a voice from within calling "Betty, Betty," with great eagerneſs. Betty obeyed the ſummons, leaving the door open. Rigby's curioſity got the better of his good manners, and he followed the maid. A few ſteps led him to the ſpot he wiſhed to be at. A parlour door was open, and in that apartment were the perſons from whom thoſe ſhrieks proceeded, that firſt alarmed him. A young lady was ſupported in the arms of an elderly woman, who, with a face of diſtreſs and horror, hung over her, and tried to recover her from the fainting fit in which ſhe then was. The maid was alſo lending her aſſiſtance; and the attention to the object of their care was ſo great, that Rigby beheld the ſcene with ſilent wonder, and unperceived by them.

The young lady, though her face was pale, had a great ſhare of beauty, and her perſon was very genteel. The other, who was attending her, had the appearance of being her mother; and the concern and tenderneſs ſhe ſhewed, confirmed Rigby in that opinion. The fair invalid began to recover herſelf; and then firſt it was they beheld Rigby, whoſe look ſhewed he was concerned at what he had ſeen.

The preſence of a ſtranger, a witneſs of their confuſion, could not but alarm the ladies. The elder approached him, and very courteouſly demanded of him, what were his commands with her; or if he wanted any perſon there. Rigby replied, that a deſire to relieve diſtreſs only, induced him to tranſgreſs the rules of good manners; and then related how he was alarmed by the ſhrieks he had heard, and was ſorry to ſee that his apprehenſions were but too well founded.

Mrs.

Mrs. Watſon, ſo was the elder lady called, thanked him for his kindneſs, and, as there was a great deal of good-nature and humanity in his countenance, and in his manner of telling his ſtory, ſhe begged the favour of him to walk in. He obeyed, and paid his compliments to the young lady, who ſat almoſt inſenſible. "I per-"ceive, Madam," ſaid he, turning to Mrs. Watſon, "that your complaiſance, "and my bold intruſion, have put a con-"ſtraint upon you; but let my intention "plead my excuſe. I really was afraid "that ſome perſon in diſtreſs uttered that "cry, which occaſioned my company "here; and I only deſigned to offer my "aſſiſtance."

"We are extremely indebted to you for "your humanity," returned Mrs. Watſon; "but on this occaſion—"

"No," interrupted the young lady, in a faint voice, "my woes are paſt redreſs."

A ſhower of tears ſucceeded her words, and ſhe found eaſe in that vent for her ſorrows.

"Not

"Not ſo, fair lady," ſaid Rigby; "there is no ſtate ſo deſperate that Provi-"dence cannot relieve; and, perhaps, I "may be an humble inſtrument in his "hands, to procure redreſs, or remedy "your ills in ſome manner. Be aſſured "that I have an hand and heart at your "ſervice on this occaſion. Deem not this "offer vain or futile: be aſſured I wiſh "to ſerve you."

"Few are there," returned Mrs. Wilcox, for that was the young lady's name, "who "intereſt themſelves in the cauſe of the "helpleſs and wretched."

"My dear," ſaid Mrs. Watſon, "there is "an all-ſeeing Providence, who will avenge "our cauſe."

This converſation only ſerved to make Rigby more curious.

"Truly, Madam," ſaid he, "I find my-"ſelf much intereſted in your cauſe at "this inſtant; and, would you make me "acquainted with the reaſon of your un-"eaſineſs, if there was any poſſibility of "doing

" doing any thing to relieve you, or make
" you happier, aſſure yourſelf that I would
" omit nothing to effect it. I am a ſtranger,
" and you may doubt me; but put me to
" the trial, and you ſhall find me what I
" profeſs myſelf."

The honeſt warmth with which Rigby ſpoke, ſerved to inſpire them with confidence. They looked at each other very ſignificantly, but ſaid nothing. At laſt Mrs. Watſon broke ſilence.

" It would be injuſtice to you, Sir, to
" doubt your ſincerity or honour," ſaid ſhe.
" It is very true, we want a friend at this
" moment, and have none near us. But
" our ſtory will beſt inform you of our
" ſituation, and the neceſſity of having
" ſome aſſiſtance. — Pray, Sir, are you of
" this part of the country?"

" I am, Madam; I was bred up not far
" from hence."

" Then I ſuppoſe you know Mr. Ben-
" net."

" I do

"I do; he is a worthy man, and much "eſteemed here. He had an eſtate of two "thouſand a year."

"I have heard that he has an ample "fortune.—Do you know his nephew "Mr. Wilcox?"

"No, Madam, I do not, but I have "heard of him. Mr. Bennet has always "regarded him as his own child, and it is "thought intends to add to his fortune "conſiderably."

"Pray, Sir, has Mr. Bennet any chil-"dren?"

"One daughter, Madam, who is reck-"oned very handſome."

"It is but too true," ſaid the young Lady, with a deep ſigh; "and I am un-"done."

"Mr. Wilcox, Sir, is the cauſe of our "preſent diſtreſs," ſaid Mrs. Watſon. "I "am the aunt of that young Lady, who is "the daughter of my younger ſiſter: we "are deſcended of a very good family, "and though not wealthy, yet do not want

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"a genteel independence. Miſs Coates, "whoſe father died when ſhe was young, "left her two thouſand pounds. Her bro- "ther, who is elder than her, is now in "the army, and abroad, or we ſhould not "want a protector. I was the neareſt re- "lation ſhe had, and, from my regard for "her mother, who alſo died when ſhe was "a meer child, I took her under my care, "and educated her as my own daughter. "As we could live better upon our mode- "rate fortunes in the country, we ſettled "at a convenient little place, near ———, "in Wiltſhire. Here we paſs'd many "years in peace and content, and my dear "niece had every advantage of education "I could procure for her. As we lived "very privately, we had very few ac- "quaintances; one or two families only "did we viſit; and our greateſt intimacy "was with Mr. Hall's family, who is re- "lated to Mr. Bennet. When Charlotte "was about eighteen, Mr. Wilcox came

"to

"to ſpend ſome time there; and to make "the place as agreeable as poſſible, Mr. "Hall had a little ball for his entertain-"ment. His eye ſoon ſingled Charlotte "out, and ſhe danced with him. His at-"tention was employed upon her all the "evening; and, I thought, ſhe did not "look upon him with the eyes of indiffer-"ence. If you don't know him, Sir, it "will be neceſſary to acquaint you, that "he is genteel in his perſon, has an agree-"able face, and a very pleaſing and inſi-"nuating addreſs. On my examining my "Charlotte, when ſhe returned home, I "found that he had made an impreſſion "on her, and that ſhe had not the power "to refuſe him permiſſion to call on her "the next day. When he came, he made "the uſual enquiries after her health, with "a tender politeneſs; and nothing private "paſſed between them, as I ſtaid in the "room during his whole viſit. When-"ever we viſited at Mr. Hall's, he was

"ſure

"ſure to be always at home; and when-
"ever any of his daughters came to ſee
"us, which happened frequently, he was
"always one of the party. In ſhort, he
"ſought, and obtained, opportunity of
"ſpeaking to her alone, and found her
"but too willing to liſten to his vows.
"Theſe interviews were had without my
"knowledge; and I was not diſpleaſed
"when he came one morning to take his
"leave of us. I endeavoured to learn,
"from Charlotte's behaviour on the ſepa-
"ration, whether ſhe ſtill retain'd her fa-
"vourable ſentiments of him, or whether
"ſhe had forgot them: but ſo deep was
"their diſſimulation, and ſo artfully did
"they conceal their paſſions, that they only
"parted like common acquaintance; nor
"did I perceive any remarkable alteration
"in her behaviour. In about three months
"after this, I was much ſurpriſed when
"Mr. Wilcox came one evening, booted
"and ſpurred, as juſt alighted from a
"journey,

"journey, into the parlour, where we were "ſitting. He ſaluted me with politeneſs: "but the agitation which Charlotte ſhew'd "in her manner, plainly diſcovered the "cauſe of his viſit. Indeed he did not "ſuffer me to remain long in doubt about "it; he unravelled the whole affair him-"ſelf."

"I have ſurpriſed you, Madam, I ſee," ſaid he, "by the abrupt appearance I have "made before you. I confeſs that I ſhould "not have ruſh'd into your preſence in "this manner, if I could have contained "myſelf any longer. I love your niece, "your charming niece, Madam: I love her "to diſtraction. My preſent peace, and "my eternal happineſs, depend on your "kindneſs and approbation of my paſſion. "My deſigns are the moſt honourable: and "I hope that Miſs Coates may be inclined "to think favourably of me; ſhe only "wants the ſanction of your conſent,

"which, I hope, you will not withhold "from me."

"You have been but a very ſhort time "acquainted with my niece, Sir; it is "hardly to be ſuppoſed that ſhe could "have time, as yet, to know or judge of "the ſincerity or truth of that paſſion you "pretend to have for her. She is her own "miſtreſs: and I have no other authority "over her than that of a friend, who "would prefer her welfare to any other "conſideration."

"She has ſome reaſon to be aſſured of "my conſtancy and ſincerity," return'd he; "and this ſtep ſhould convince you of "my attachment to her. I have a ſmall "eſtate of my own, 'tis true; but I have "great expectations from my uncle, Mr. "Bennet, whom you have heard Mr. Hall's "family talk of. Should I marry without "his conſent, it would be a good reaſon "for his refuſing to do what he has pro-"miſed; and though I had rather endure

"miſery

"misery and misfortune with your niece, "than ſplendor and grandeur with ano- "ther, yet that ſhould not be the cauſe "why I ſhould ſpurn thoſe gifts which "may be offered me, and which, with a "little prudence, I may be able to pre- "ſerve. I am not yet of age; nor can I "lawfully marry your niece, whom my "heart is inviolably devoted to. Permit "me then, in the mean time, to viſit you "here in your ſolitude, and earn, by my "ſincerity and attention, your good opinion "of me."

"I ſhall avoid repeating every thing that "was ſaid: but finding that Charlotte was "well inclined to receive him as a lover, he "had my permiſſion to viſit as often as "ſuited his convenience. He made the moſt "of this leave, and came very frequently to "us. As he always profeſſed and ſupported "the greateſt appearance of honour, I had "no ſort of ſcruple in permitting them to "enjoy a mutual communication of their

" ſentiments, and indulging them with pri-
" vate interviews: and indeed to ſuch an
" height had Charlotte's affection for him
" riſen, that I thought it would be danger-
" ous to throw any obſtacle in the way of
" their happineſs. But I frequently uſed to
" hint to her, that prudence required her to
" be more reſerved in the acknowledgment
" of her regard for him; and obſerved, that
" ſhe ſhould not truſt him too much. Her
" conſtant reply was, that ſhe was tho-
" roughly convinced of his honour and af-
" fection; and that I had nothing to fear
" from the imprudence of her conduct.

" Things went on in this manner for eigh-
" teen months; and ſtill I kept the moſt
" vigilant eye over Mr. Wilcox's proceed-
" ings. A cold ſeized me, which was ſuc-
" ceeded by a fever, and I was very ill for
" a long time; nor was I judged able to
" leave my chamber for ſix weeks after the
" fever was gone. Mr. Wilcox came in the
" mean time to ſee Charlotte; but finding

" I was

"I was ſo ill, went away, promiſing to return "again ſhortly. The care and attention "which my dear child ſhewed me, during "my ſickneſs, endeared her, if poſſible, "more than ever to me. Mr. Wilcox "came again as I was getting better, and "frequently uſed to ſit with me; and, by "his engaging behaviour, raiſed my ſpirits, "and contributed to my recovery. As I "could not quit my chamber, he had ne-"ceſſarily many interviews with my niece, "which I could not prevent. My health "was ſoon re-eſtabliſhed, and matters went "on again in their old train.

"In about four months after that, I had "great reaſon to believe that my poor "Charlotte was going to be taken ill: Her "health viſibly declined, her ſpirits were "gone; no more the chearful and enter-"taining companion of my ſolitary hours, "ſhe ſat melancholy and ſilent, and fre-"quent ſighs heaved her boſom. My en-"quiries after her health availed nothing.

"She ever replied to them, that ſhe was "very well; and though ſhe would not "confeſs it, yet it was evident that ſome-"thing preyed on her. I was much alarm-"ed, and apprehended what I dreaded to "know for a certainty.

"Mr. Wilcox came over to ſee us, but "it was very privately; and we had ſtrict "injunctions, not to mention a ſyllable of "his viſits to Mr. Hall's family. During "his ſtay, Charlotte appeared more chear-"ful and eaſy than ſhe had been for ſome "time before; but on his departure, re-"lapſed into her former melancholy and "liſtleſſneſs. I again renewed my enqui-"ries, and preſſed her in the tendereſt man-"ner to make me acquainted with the cauſe "of her uneaſineſs. With great difficulty "the matter was extorted from her; and "ſhe confeſſed, with much heſitation, that "during my illneſs, when Mr. Wilcox had "viſited her, ſhe was induced to conſent to "a private marriage; that the fears he had

"of

"of his uncle's coming to the knowledge "of this affair, was the reaſon why it was "done in this ſecret manner: and ſhe fur- "ther aſſured me, that he had behaved as "the moſt tender and affectionate huſband; "and at that time ſhe was afraid of being "with child; and when he was laſt with "her, he had conſented to her acquainting "me with the whole tranſaction.

"The matter was now paſt redreſs: and "inſtead of giving her any pain, by any un- "ſeaſonable reprehenſions, I endeavoured to "put the beſt face on the affair, though "I could not help conceiving badly of his "intentions, who took ſuch an advantage "of my illneſs; but theſe notions I con- "cealed very induſtriouſly from her. When "he came to viſit us again, which was ſhort- "ly after, he acknowledged himſelf to be "her huſband, in my preſence; and then "entered into an explanation of matters, "and the reaſons which induced him to "take this ſtep. But as Charlotte was then

" encreaſing in bulk, it was judged neceſ-
" ſary to quit that part of the country, to
" prevent this affair from coming to light,
" and to hide the effects of their mutual
" paſſion. He admitted the juſtneſs of the
" reaſoning; and informed us, that there
" was a little houſe within ten or a dozen
" miles of his uncle's, where we might live
" very retired. He meant, this houſe in
" which we now are; and in a ſhort time
" we were removed to it. Here Mrs. Wil-
" cox brought her huſband a fine boy, now
" three years old; and here we have lived
" ſequeſtered and unknown theſe three years
" and an half.

" The ſhort and irregular viſits which
" Mr. Wilcox has made, we have been for-
" ced to be ſatisfied with, as ſuch conduct was
" the effect of neceſſity. This, though not
" ſo agreeable as could be wiſhed, yet ren-
" ders us contented and happy; and thus
" we ſhould have remained, if Betty had not
" brought us ſome very diſtreſſing intelli-
" gence.

"gence. She neither knew Mr. Wilcox's "real name, whom we always called Smith; "nor did ſhe know his connexions: but "going yeſterday to ſee her friends, by our "permiſſion, ſhe brought us home word, "that a grand wedding was going forward "at 'Squire Bennet's. This alarmed our "curioſity: and upon an enquiry, we learn- "ed, that Mr. Wilcox was going to be mar- "ried to Mr. Bennet's daughter, either to- "morrow or next day. This affected poor "Charlotte ſo much, that ſhe fainted away, "and cauſed thoſe ſcreams which induced "you thus politely and humanely to offer "us your aſſiſtance. I have now, Sir, in- "formed you of the cauſe of our uneaſi- "neſs; and, ſituated as we are, without a "friend, or even an acquaintance, what "to do I know not."

While Mrs. Watſon related this ſtory to the attentive Rigby, Charlotte covered her ſorrows from his view: However, fre- quent ſobs and heavy ſighs informed him

very ſufficiently of her grief. He was very much affected at this tale, delivered with much ſimplicity and candour; and it was ſome time before he could recollect himſelf, or determine in what manner he ſhould proceed to ſerve this young Lady, whoſe cauſe he reſolved to eſpouſe; and had he even been wavering, the entrance of a ſweet little boy, who ran to his afflicted mother, would have been ſufficiently powerful to fix his reſolutions.

"Your ſtory, Madam, is very diſtreſ-
"ſing indeed, and perhaps it may be
"worſe than we ſuppoſe: for if your mar-
"riage was valid, I can hardly imagine
"Mr. Wilcox would venture to take a
"ſecond wife. I fear he has impoſed upon
"you: but I will contrive to ſee him to-
"morrow morning, and let you know the
"truth of the matter."

The Ladies both expreſſed their obligations to him.

"But,"

"But," ſaid he, "if you will write a "letter to your huſband, it will be a means "of introducing me with more propriety "to him, and my words will have more "weight; as he muſt imagine me acquaint-"ed with this whole tranſaction, which "will not do him any credit on the diſ-"covery."

Mrs. Watſon joined Rigby in opinion, and Mrs. Wilcox retired to write the letter.

The aunt in the mean time told Mr. Rigby, (for he acquainted her with his name and habitation,) that ſhe hoped he would not expoſe himſelf to any danger of diſobliging Mr. Wilkins or his mother, by intereſting himſelf in their behalf.

"On the contrary, Madam, I ſhould diſ-"oblige them if I did not. But even a "weak advocate in the cauſe of oppreſſed "innocence and virtue becomes powerful: "every thing that I can do to ſerve you, "you may command."

Mrs. Wilcox returned with the letter, and apologizing at the ſame time that ſhe thanked him, ſaid ſhe was ſo diſtracted, ſhe knew not what to ſay or do.

Rigby expreſſed his ſorrow at the cauſe; and again aſſured her that he would bring her ſome account how he ſucceeded, or in what poſture matters ſtood. He drank a couple of glaſſes of wine at their earneſt entreaty, aſſuring him that it would be of ſervice to him after his walk. He then took his leave, and went the ſhorteſt way home.

His imagination, during this ſpace of time, was not idle: he conſidered how he ſhould proceed, and in what moſt effectual manner he could ſerve Mrs Wilcox. Indeed he ſpent the greater part of the night in theſe cogitations: but knowing that no time was to be loſt, he roſe very early, and proceeded to Mr. Bennet's with all poſſible expedition. It was diſtant twelve miles from Wilkins's: and it was between eight and nine, when Rigby arrived in the court-

yard

yard before the houſe. Here ſeemed to be a buſtle, and the ſervants were all in a hurry. Two carriages were waiting to proceed to church with the bride and bridegroom, for the news which poor Mrs. Wilcox had ſo providentially heard, was but too true. Rigby addreſſed the firſt ſervant he ſaw, whom he imagined to belong to the houſe, and aſked him whether Mr. Wilcox was at home.

"At home, Lord bleſs you! at home! "yes, Sir; he's juſt going to be married to "maſter's daughter."

"I have ſome buſineſs with him," replied Rigby, "and muſt ſpeak with him."

"I believe you muſt ſtay, Sir, 'till he "comes back from church then, for they "are all ready, and the coach waits for "them."

"I muſt and will ſee him before he goes "there," ſaid Rigby, alighting off his horſe, and going towards the door of the houſe.

"Well,

"Well, Sir, if your buſineſs is ſo very "urgent, I will let him know you want "him. What name ſhall I tell him, Sir?"

"If I told you, it would be unknown "to Mr. Wilcox: you may ſay, a ſtranger "wants to ſee him."

His horſe was given into the cuſtody of the groom, and he followed the ſervant into the houſe, who ſhewed him into a parlour, while he went on ſearch of Mr. Wilcox. He ſoon came, elate with hope and eager with deſire; his heart exulting in the proſpect of happineſs, and joy animated his countenance. This circumſtance, with the addition of dreſs, rendered his perſon, naturally graceful, an object worthy of notice.

"I am informed Sir, that you have ſome "buſineſs with me."

"I have, Sir; the delivery of this letter "is the principal part of it."

The form of his viſage changed as he read theſe words.

"IF

"IF your heart is not totally a ſtranger
"to humanity, as well as love, you
"muſt conceive what I felt on hearing the
"news of your going to be married. Are
"your oaths forgotten, or can you pretend
"to break the nuptial tie, in which I was
"bound yours for life? Sure, Sir, you can-
"not intend to reward the paſſion which
"you endeavoured to inſpire me with, and
"but too fatally accompliſhed, by leaving
"me to ſhame and public diſgrace. What
"is to become of the helpleſs infant which
"you once ſo much delighted in? and what
"is to be the portion of the wretched mo-
"ther? Cannot the tender names of huſ-
"band and father, recal your affection?
"and will not your honour and ſenſibility
"prevent your making any other woman
"unhappy, by giving her an heart or hand
"which I lay a prior and ſuperior claim
"to?—But I am diſtracted—No other wo-
"man can or ſhall poſſeſs them while I
"have

" have life or power to aſſert my right,
" which I ſhall do, and prove to the world
" that I am, your affectionate and lawful,
" though neglected wife,

CHARLOTTE WILCOX."

When he had finiſhed, he folded up the letter, and put it in his waiſtcoat pocket very deliberately.

" It is very well, Sir. Well, Sir;—and
" well, Sir; you were charged with the de-
" livery of this letter, and you have ex-
" ecuted your commiſſion."

" Very true, Sir, for ſo much of it; but
" I was to take an anſwer back, and that
" which you have given is ſo very unſa-
" tisfactory, that I cannot think of encreaſ-
" ing Mrs. Wilcox's affliction by repeating
" it to her."

" You are likely to have no other, Sir;
" and I beg you may retire."

" Upon

"Upon my word, Sir, I ſhall not: that "Lady has been groſsly injured, as I have "juſt reaſon to believe, and it remains with "you to do her juſtice."

"What do you mean, Sir? am I to "marry a girl whom I only diverted my "ſofter hours with: ſhe is not my wife, "nor ever ſhall be."

"You have acknowledged her to be your "wife very often, Sir: ſhe has been eſteem-"ed in that light by you: and if your tak-"ing advantage of her partiality for you "and her inexperience, impoſed upon her "under the pretence of marriage, ſhe is "really your wife."

"I am not at leiſure at preſent to attend "to your caſuiſtry, Sir; and I once more re-"peat it to you, that I am not married to "that woman, whoſe advocate you are. "Your buſineſs with me is now finiſhed, "and I ſhall give you no other anſwer."

"Then I ſhall apply to Mr. Bennet for "one."

"What

"What ſhould you apply to him for?" ſaid Wilcox haſtily, with a countenance highly expreſſive of fury.

"To know," replied Rigby very calmly, "whether he will chuſe to give you his "daughter while you have a wife, at leaſt "a nominal one; and to ſatisfy my own "curioſity."

"Do you know what a taſk you have "undertaken?"

"Perfectly well: I came here on behalf "of your wife, Mrs. Wilcox: I came to "prevent the ruin and miſery of an un-"happy young Lady, whom you were go-"ing to marry, and to aſſert the cauſe of "innocence and virtue."

"But do you conſider, Sir," ſaid Wilcox, ſoftening his voice, "what an irreparable "injury your proceeding ſo raſhly in this "matter may do me?—I ſhall loſe two "hundred a year by this behaviour of her's; "and ſhe has but two thouſand pounds for "her portion.—That ſhe ſhould be ſo blind

"to

"to the proſpect Fortune opens to her!—
"I will tell you what, Sir: I will al-
"low her three hundred pounds a year
"for life, if ſhe will conſent to accept
"that, and drop all claims which ſhe may
"pretend to on me."

"I am by no means authorized to con-
"clude any ſuch agreement; nor would it
"be accepted, if it was offered. That is
"a poor compenſation for the loſs of her
"peace and honour; a weak ſhield to de-
"fend her from the inſults of the world,
"who will reproach her for the ſhame you
"have brought on her. Beſides, Sir, ſhe
"loves you as her huſband: and do you
"think ſhe will look upon that ſum as a
"recompence ſufficient to prevail on her
"to conſent to abandon your ſociety all
"the days of her life? I am ſure ſhe would
"not. And had you ſeen the agony ſhe was
"in, when the intelligence of your in-
"tended marriage reached her, I am con-
"vinced your affection for her and your

"child,

" child, would have revived, and pre-
" vented your wronging her in ſo tender a
" point."

" Perhaps it might, and, perhaps it
" might not. But that is very immate-
" rial now. I really cannot ſettle that
" matter at preſent: to-morrow, or the
" day after, I ſhall be more at leiſure,
" and then we will talk about it more
" fully."

" That will not do, Sir; this matter
" muſt be ſettled inſtantly; another hour
" would have put it out of my power
" to have ſettled it at all: therefore, Sir, I
" muſt have a definitive and poſitive an-
" ſwer."

" And pray, Sir, who are you, who thus
" aſſume a right to demand it?"

" That does not ſignify, Sir, who or
" what I am: I have no further buſineſs
" with you; I will now ſpeak to your
" uncle."

" That

"That you muſt have my permiſſion "for firſt."

"I will try that," ſaid Rigby. And ringing a bell that was very convenient to him, a ſervant appeared at the door.

"Tell Mr. Bennet," ſaid he, in a peremptory tone of voice, "that a gentle-"man has buſineſs of the utmoſt import-"ance to communicate to him, and muſt "ſpeak to him inſtantly."

Wilcox ran to the door, and gave the man poſitive orders not to deliver the meſſage.

"And ſo, Sir," ſaid Rigby, with a contemptuous ſmile, "you think to prevent "my ſpeaking to Mr. Bennet. I took "this private manner of telling you my "errand here, as moſt reſpectful and pro-"per; nor would I diſtreſs the young "lady, who has ſo happily eſcaped the "ſnare that was laid for her."

"Villain!" exclaimed Wilcox, his rage overcoming both his reaſon and prudence; "what

"what has tempted thee to ruſh thus "blindly on deſtruction, by coming to in- "ſult me here, and in the moſt critical "hour of my life!"

"Sir," ſaid Rigby, "I have treated "you with temper and civility; and though "I diſregard your threats, I ſhall not take "the proper notice of them at preſent: "but I have an excellent memory; I "ſhall find out Mr. Bennet, and then re- "turn to you."

He made an offer to go to the door, when Wilcox ſeized him by the collar— "If I muſt ſuffer," ſaid he, "I will moſt "willingly, for ridding the world of ſuch "an inſolent, meddling raſcal as thou art."

He aimed a blow at Rigby, who caught it with his left-hand, and, with a judicious application of his toes, tripped up his antagoniſt, and brought him to the ground, overſetting in his fall a large ſide-board of plate and glaſſes, that had been laid out for the ceremony.

The

The horrid craſh and noiſe brought Mr. Bennet into the parlour, followed by his ſervants. Miſs Bennet, alarmed at the ſound, ran to the place whence it proceeded. But how much was ſhe ſurpriſed, to ſee her intended huſband lie ſenſeleſs and bleeding on the floor, ſtupified with the fall, and a cut in his head, which he had ſtruck againſt the table; and at the appearance of a ſtrange young man, ſtanding over him with a look of pity, his waiſtcoat open, and his ſhirt torn away from his neck. She ſcreamed, and that brought Rigby to the conſideration of the ſituation in which he was; for he lamented the accident that had befallen Wilcox, who really was the aggreſſor.

The ſervants ſnatched up their young maſter from the floor, where he lay, amidſt broken glaſs: and ſeating him in a chair, began to endeavour to reſtore him to himſelf. Rigby, with a politeneſs that was natural to him, approached Mr. Bennet, who

who had gone to his daughter's aſſiſtance, and was bidding her compoſe herſelf, (for ſhe was extremely agitated at this ſcene; and the more eſpecially as ſhe knew not the cauſe of it.) He began to apologize to Mr. Bennet for the confuſion he had cauſed in his houſe; but added, that his nephew was the aggreſſor, who had attacked and inſulted him.

"I heard the latter part of your con-
"verſation, Sir, and am of your opinion;
"but I ſhould be glad to know the cauſe
"of your quarrel."

"You ſhall, Sir: his oppoſing my ſpeak-
"ing to you was the cauſe why it went ſo
"far. But it is neceſſary we ſhould be
"alone."

"That we ſhall preſently."

The company, who were already aſſembled in the houſe, hearing this uproar among the ſervants, ran to the ſcene of action to learn the reaſon of it. Some applied themſelves to aſſiſt Mr. Wilcox, and

others

others to Miſs Bennet, who ſat pale and trembling, and was as much an object of pity as the wounded man. Rigby, on whom every eye was turned, ſtood looking through a window into the garden.

Mr. Wilcox had, by this time, recovered the uſe of his ſenſes: his wound being dreſſed by a ſurgeon who happened then to be at the houſe, who told him there were no dangerous ſymptons. Mr. Bennet requeſted the company to retire from that parlour till it could be prepared for their reception; and having ſent away all the ſervants, he applied to Rigby for the explanation of his behaviour.

"That, Sir," replied he, "you ſhall "have: and I am glad Mr. Wilcox is pre- "ſent, as well as your daughter, whom "this affair more principally concerns. As "for me, Sir, I was only induced by hu- "manity and pity to take the part I did. "Your nephew's raſhneſs has made me now "more particularly intereſted: for unleſs I

"can clear myſelf, I ſhall be looked upon "by you and this young lady in a very "bad light. It was to ſerve another la- "dy, who claims that gentleman for her "huſband, that brought me here."

"Her huſband!" ſaid Mr. Bennet in great ſurpriſe.

"It is very true, Sir: and a letter which "I delivered him will ſet that matter in a "better light."

Mr. Bennet demanded the letter from his nephew, who gave it with a very bad grace, and having peruſed the contents, declared it was ſomething extraordinary.

Rigby then gave an ample account of the manner in which he became acquainted with Mrs. Wilcox, as he called her all through his narrative: and related, to the aſtoniſhment of Mr. Bennet and his daughter, every thing that the reader has been already informed of concerning them.

During

During this recital, Wilcox maintained a ſullen ſilence, and by that means gave weight to what was ſaid againſt him.

"This ſeems to be a very extraordinary "affair, Sir," ſaid Mr. Bennet. "Do "theſe ladies live far off."

"About twelve miles, Sir."

"Then we will pay them a viſit. By "your not denying any thing this gentle- "man has alledged againſt you, Mr. Wil- "cox, I ſuppoſe we may take it for grant- "ed that it is all true," ſaid he, turning to his nephew.

"It is not, Sir," replied he: "and I have "already declared that I am not married "to her."

"I know not, Sir," replied Rigby, "how "it is: the lady ſays ſhe is his lawful "wife, and as you propoſe taking the "trouble of viſiting her, ſhe will be able "to ſatisfy your more particular enqui- "ries."

"You may depend upon it, Sir, that "my daughter and I ſhall viſit her to- "morrow if you will pleaſe to give me "her addreſs, and I ſhall be glad to meet "you there. I ſhall beg the favour of "you to ſtay to dinner with me: this will "prevent enquiries being made about my "reaſons for poſtponing the nuptial cere- "mony, and which I ſhall ſtifle as much "as poſſible."

Rigby conſented with ſome intreaty: and Mr. and Miſs Bennet went to join their company, Rigby ſtaying behind with Mr. Wilcox at his own deſire.

"You have requeſted to ſpeak to me, "Sir. What are your commands?"

"You have done me ſignal ſervice to- "day, Sir," ſaid Wilcox. "This morn- "ing that ſaw me riſe crowned with the "hopes of enjoying my uncle's fortune, "and his charming daughter, ſees me al- "ſo diſappointed and ruined; and to you "I am indebted for this good office."

"Theſe

"Theſe are very unmerited reproaches. "I can have no intereſt in your deſtruc- "tion: and though I know that your mar- "riage with Miſs Bennet muſt be broke "off, yet I could not have procured juſ- "tice for that lady you have injured with- "out taking this ſtep. Had Mrs. Wil- "cox's brother been in the way, matters "might yet have gone to greater and more "dreadful extremities. Compaſſion to her "ſufferings made me undertake this diſ- "agreeable taſk: and even now your "ſituation with your uncle is not irretriev- "able."

"In what manner can I be reſtored to "his good opinion? As you have been "the means of undoing me, you ſhould "give me your advice how I may be re- "inſtated again."

"This application to me ſeems a little "extraordinary, Sir; I can hardly ima- "gine you in earneſt."

"You may be aſſured I am."

"My knowledge of Mr. Bennet's cha-
"racter is only by report, and you muſt
"therefore be much better acquainted
"with his temper than I am. If there
"was any impoſition in this affair with
"Mrs. Wilcox, you had better confeſs
"it to him: he is a good natured man,
"and moſt probably will be induced to
"forgive and reſtore you to his favour
"again. There is no injury done to his
"daughter: and the ſight of your wife
"and child may gain upon him very
"much."

"It may be ſo. I have wronged that
"poor girl, and am now ſufficiently pu-
"niſhed for it."

He then unfolded the whole matter to Rigby, acquainting him that a truſty ſervant, dreſſed in a clergyman's habit, had performed the ceremony: that conſequently the unſuſpecting, credulous girl was impoſed on, and he was admitted to her arms. He concluded by ſaying, "that

"Mr.

"Mr. Rigby was now informed of the "whole matter, and he hoped he would "ſtand his friend."

"As far as I can, you may depend up-"on me, Sir: it was not to gratify any "private malice that I came here to-day: "it was to procure juſtice for that unhap-"py Lady who mourns your eſtranged "love. If I have procured that, my bu-"ſineſs ends, and every friendly action "that I can do for you I will. I promiſe "you I entertain no animoſity or hatred "againſt you on account of your paſſion-"ate expreſſions: that is all forgotten."

"Your generoſity overwhelms me, and "though," ſaid he, ſtretching out his hand in token of friendſhip to Rigby, "you have deſtroyed this ſcheme of hap-"pineſs, I hope you will help to ſettle ſome "other for me."

Rigby ſhook hands with him: and telling him he might be happy if he would, left him, and went to ſeek Mr. Bennet.

However mortifying this ſtep was to Wilcox's pride, yet he found it extremely neceſſary if he expected to be upon any terms with his uncle. The viſit of Rigby that day, and the intended expedition the next to ſee his wife, would ruin him entirely with his uncle, if he could not by ſome means or other ward off the impending blow. This induced him to make Rigby a confident, and to intreat him to be his friend. He undertook this taſk very readily: and Wilcox requeſted him to tell his uncle how ſorry he was for the offence he had committed, and then to let him have ſome converſation with him. He therefore ſat, when Rigby had left him, in eager expectation of his uncle's approach, tormented with a variety of diſagreable and vexatious thoughts. Rigby, as he had promiſed, went to Mr. Bennet, and told him what his nephew deſired; he added every thing that he could with any propriety ſay to him on Mr. Wilcox's behalf;

behalf; and Mr. Bennet complying with his deſire, went to him directly.

At his approach, he threw himſelf on his knees before him: confeſſed that he had deluded Miſs Coates by the appearance of a marriage; that it was by no means valid, nor, had he married his couſin, could ſhe have ſuffered: but that now it remained only for him to lament the iniquity of his behaviour, by which he had ſo long abuſed her; and that, with his permiſſion, he would accompany them to-morrow to Mrs. Wilcox's, and there have the ceremony lawfully performed; hoping, at the ſame time, that he ſhould not entirely loſe his uncle's favour, which was the deareſt thing on earth to him. Mr. Bennet really loved him, or he would not have been ſo ready to have given him his daughter, whom he truly loved, and all his fortune. He reproached him with his conduct: the other heightened his crime, and by his repentance and apparent con-

trition prevailed on the uncle to forgive him, and he promiſed to provide for his wife and child, inſiſting on it that he ſhould go with them the next day to her: this he agreed to, and Wilcox was reſtored in ſome meaſure into favour.

Mr. Bennet was more concerned at the interruption of this match than his daughter, who had never formed any choice herſelf, and whoſe reſpect for parental authority induced her to marry her couſin, whom ſhe was not very fond of; therefore this affair was rather pleaſing to her than otherwiſe.

Miſs Bennet was now in her eighteenth year, and her charms were the theme of all the young gentleman in the country, who could make any pretenſions to her. She loſt her mother when ſhe was fifteen, which affected her ſo much that her father thought ſhe would not have recovered it; and as ſhe was an only child, he forgot his grief in endeavouring to alleviate hers.

hers. A ſoft languor overſpread her face; her looks were complacent and gentle; her mild blue eyes ſpoke the ſenſibility of her heart; the good-nature and tenderneſs of her diſpoſition appeared in every action: her mind had received every poſſible cultivation; and as ſhe poſſeſſed very good natural parts, ſhe attained to excellence in the moſt polite and amiable accompliſhments. Not to give pain to a parent, whom ſhe tenderly loved, as ſhe had no abſolute averſion to her couſin, ſhe determined to make her father happy rather than herſelf, and ſaw the preparations for the nuptials going forward without an emotion of any kind. We have mentioned her ſurpriſe at ſeeing Rigby and her couſin in the parlour; but though ſhe was much ſhocked at the ſcene, yet ſhe could not help looking very attentively at the young ſtranger. When ſhe heard him relate the cauſe of his creating that diſturbance, and ſaw how kindly he had eſpouſed the intereſt of the

friendleſs and unprotected, and how humanely and cautiouſly he ſpoke of Mr. Wilcox, ſhe felt the tendereſt emotions in his favour. His perſonal accompliſhments did not paſs unnoticed by her; but the generoſity of his behaviour, and the gallantry of his character, ſtruck her forcibly; and ſhe wiſhed in ſecret that ſhe had been doomed to the arms of ſuch a man. Her good opinion of him was not altered when ſhe entered into converſation with him: ſhe found him ſenſible, ſprightly, and engaging, and ſhe was ſoon more enamoured than ſhe knew of. Rigby beheld her with reſpect and pity: for he conjectured ſhe muſt have been fond of the man ſhe was going to be married to, and that this diſappointment was ſhocking.

Mr. Bennet and his nephew ſoon joined the company, making a general apology concerning the delay of the nuptials. Tho' this proceeding was ſomewhat extraordinary, yet politeneſs prevented their friends from

from making any enquiries as well as the preſence of the parties concerned. After dinner Rigby took his leave, and Mr. Bennet following him out, promiſed he would meet him the next morning at the Lady's houſe: and Rigby aſſuring him he would not fail to be there, once more took his leave, and departed.

## BOOK V.

RIGBY, when he quitted Mr. Bennet's, went directly to Mrs. Wilcox, as he ſuppoſed that ſhe was very uneaſy about his coming, to inform her of the reſult of his interview with her huſband. The two Ladies ſat in a ſtate of anxious expectation: and having paid his compliments to them, he made them acquainted in general terms with what had happened, and told them that they might expect Mr. Bennet and his daughter, and Mr. Wilcox,

cox, there the next day, and that he would take the liberty of waiting on them alſo, as they had appointed to meet him there. So unexpected and agreeable a turn gave them great pleaſure: and they were not ſparing of their thanks and acknowledgements of gratitude to their benefactor. Rigby aſſured them of his good intentions to ſerve them: and, promiſing to be punctual, the next day, as the evening began to approach, he took his leave, and departed. Not even Mrs. Wilcox, who, it may naturally be ſuppoſed, expected the interview on the enſuing day with ſome degree of anxiety and impatience, was more earneſt about it than Miſs Bennet. The more ſhe thought of Rigby the more ſhe liked him: and when the characters of the two men were compared, her judgment approved the choice of her heart, and her couſin was no longer tolerable in her eyes.

In the morning the parties ſet out to meet Rigby at Mrs. Wilcox's; and Lydia Bennet indulged herſelf in the pleaſure ſhe ſhould have in ſeeing Mr. Rigby again. He was punctual: and when Mr. Bennet's coach ſtopped at the door, he flew to hand them out, and conduct them to Mrs. Wilcox, whoſe heart underwent ſtrange palpitations, fearful and anxious for her fate, which would be now determined. When Rigby took the gentle Lydia's hand in his, to help her from the carriage, he felt it tremble, ignorant that he was the cauſe of that trepidation. Wilcox's ſenſations were not the moſt pleaſing: he was confounded and abaſhed at the thoughts of facing the woman he deſigned to have wronged, and ſilence and dejection teſtified his mortification.

As they paſſed through the little garden which lay at the front of the houſe, and which we have before deſcribed, they could not help admiring the taſte in which it was laid

laid out, and the neatneſs in which it was kept. When they entered the houſe, Rigby introduced Mr. and Miſs Bennet to Mrs. Wilcox and her aunt: and Mr. Bennet immediately addreſſed her by the title of his niece; and aſſured her, that he conſidered her as ſuch; and, though he was very ſorry for the occaſion of his viſit to her in one ſhape, yet he was extremely pleaſed with it in another; and had no doubt but it would be productive of much happineſs to them all. She returned his compliment with a reſpectful politeneſs, which pleaſed him very much: he then told her, that his nephew was very deſirous to make her every amends in his power, for the ill treatment ſhe had met with from him. Here Wilcox interrupted him, by aſſuring him, that, by his future conduct, he would endeavour to make his dear Charlotte forget that he ever intended her any injury. Mr. Bennet led her to him. Wilcox embraced her tenderly, and called her

his

his dear wife. The tears of joy that paced one another down her cheeks, calmed her tranſports. Miſs Bennet was not remiſs in paying her all proper compliments on the occaſion, and ſaluted her by the title of couſin.

Mrs. Watſon's apprehenſions, which ſhe had but too juſtly formed, being now at an end, all was joy and happineſs in the good woman's breaſt. The tear of pleaſure ſtood alſo in Rigby's eye, who was conſidered by the women as the cauſe of their happineſs; nor did he go unrewarded with thanks. The little boy was introduced, and careſſed by the whole company. His father felt his affection revive at the ſight of him; and, as he had now gone too far to retract, he made the beſt of every thing. Mrs. Watſon had prepared ſome refreſhments for her gueſts; and they accepted of them, as well as Mrs. Wilcox's invitation to dinner. It was a day of happineſs to them all: for Wilcox

appeared

appeared to be very well ſatisfied, whether he was really ſo or no.

Rigby had attached himſelf to Miſs Bennet by chance; but it rendered her as happy as if it had been done with deſign; nay, ſhe ſometimes would flatter herſelf that it was from predilection. The fortunate event of this affair filled them all with gaiety: and many ſprightly ſallies eſcaped Rigby, who was heartily rejoiced at the ſucceſs of his negociation. They were not loſt upon Lydia, who was particularly animated herſelf, and diſplayed her charms to the inſenſible Rigby, whoſe reſpect forbad him to entertain any tenderer ſentiments.

The dinner was elegant and good, conſidering the time that they had to prepare it in, and the place: however, it ſhewed Mrs. Wilcox to advantage, as the miſtreſs of a family. Mr. Bennet and his daughter expreſſed great ſatisfaction at every thing: and when dinner was over, he told his niece, that it was time they ſhould be

ſettled;

ſettled; and, without hinting to her the impoſition that had been already practiſed on her, leſt it might leſſen her huſband in her eyes, or be the cauſe of future uneaſineſs, he begged, for his ſatisfaction, that Mr. Wilcox would undergo the trouble of having the marriage ceremony repeated; ſaying, that he was a whimſical old man, and liked to ſee his kindred faſt and ſecurely bound. Mrs. Wilcox ſubmitted herſelf entirely to him: and he fixed the next day but one for the celebration of theſe nuptials, and invited Mr. Rigby to be preſent; adding, that he ſhould be always glad to ſee him at his houſe; and inſiſted on his frequently viſiting him. After tea, Mr. Bennet and his family departed, and Rigby alſo went home. Miſs Bennet was ſtill more pleaſed with his company and converſation than ever; and the praiſes which Mrs. Watſon and Mrs. Wilcox rendered to his good-nature, humanity, and generoſity, only ſerved to encreaſe her

good

good opinion of him. Her diſpoſition, naturally mild and gentle, was ſuſceptible of the tendereſt impreſſions: they penetrated deeply, and were not eaſily effaced. He alone employed her thoughts; and long was the time, in her imagination, till ſhe ſaw him again. He went on the appointed day, to be a witneſs of the ceremony, and of that happineſs he had been the means of procuring the whole family. All was joy and rapture: and Mr. Bennet promiſed never to withdraw his protection from them. He made his niece a preſent of a very handſome ſet of jewels; and aſſured her, he would ſettle a thouſand pounds on her little ſon, and would ſpeedily conſult with her huſband for his further advancement in life. Rigby was truly happy in ſeeing them ſo; and was as much pleaſed, and in as great ſpirits, as any of them. It was agreed, that in a few days Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox ſhould go over to Mr. Bennet's, and ſpend a month; and by that

means

means be introduced to the neighbouring gentry, who would render their ſituation more agreeable. The new-married couple accordingly ſoon went over to him; and he fulfilled all his promiſes.

The time now approached for Rigby to return to Cambridge again; and he went to Mr. Bennet's to pay a viſit and take his leave. The gentle Lydia's countenance was overcaſt with ſorrow, when ſhe was informed of the intention of his viſit; but it was not perceived by any of the company. Mrs. Wilcox expreſſed her gratitude to him, for the good offices he had done her; and as a very tender and ſincere friendſhip ſubſiſted between the two ladies, ſhe made no ſcruple of taking a ring off her finger before Miſs Bennet, in which was contained ſome of her own, and her brother's, hair, ſet round with diamonds, and, preſenting it to him, inſiſted he ſhould wear it as a ſmall memorial of her friendſhip for him. He returned the compliment,

ment, by thanking, and promiſing to obey her; aſſuring her, at the ſame time, that ſhe over-rated his poor ſervices very much. The gentlemen now returned, and they both expreſſed their ſorrow at Rigby's departure. After ſpending the day with them, he took his leave, not before Mr. Bennet had made him promiſe to come and ſee him again on his return.

As this whole tranſaction was kept ſecret, it did not reach the worthy family at Mr. Wilkins's, who all loved Tom. His good-nature and affability rendered him the delight of every body. As it was neneſſary that ſome road ſhould be pointed out for him to purſue in future life, and he being indifferent what profeſſion to chuſe, upon a conſultation held with his old friend Mr. Waters, he gave his opinion for his taking orders. Rigby had no ſort of objection to the church, but rather a liking for it. Mr. Waters, who knew his integrity and uprightneſs, the honeſty of his

his heart, and the earneſtneſs with which he attached himſelf to any thing his mind was ſet upon, thought that he would be an honour to the gown. It was therefore determined, as ſoon as he was capable of receiving orders, that he ſhould be ordained. It was very pleaſing to Mrs. Rigby that her Tom ſhould be a clergyman, eſpecially as his father was one; and we may be allowed to call him her ſon with great propriety, for ſhe was as fond of him as if he had been really her child; nor did he fail in paying her that duty and attention that a mother claimed.

Tom mounted his horſe with a heavy heart, when obliged to part from all thoſe endearing ties that formed his happineſs: and he had travelled for two days before he got rid of the melancholy ſenſations that attended his bidding them adieu at Wilkins's, whoſe whole family he conſidered as related to him in ſome meaſure.

The

The third day, as he was purſuing his journey, his road lay through a wild and loneſome country for a few miles. He entered on a wood, and had proceeded for a little way, when he thought he heard the ſound of blows and loud voices: he quickened his pace, and ſoon arrived at the ſcene of action: a man, who ſeemed to be ſtrong and ſtout, plainly, yet well-dreſſed, was defending himſelf againſt the aſſaults of three men, armed with bludgeons. He had only a quarter-ſtaff in his hand, which, nevertheleſs, he employed to a very good purpoſe, both in his own defence, and the annoyance of his aſſailants; one of whom he had knocked down juſt as Rigby ſtopped his horſe at the place where the combat was. The ſpot they had choſen, was a path which led through the wood, and lay along the road-ſide: the gentleman neither called for aſſiſtance, or, by his conduct, did he ſeem to deſire any. However Rigby could not ſee ſuch odds,

and

and though the gentleman defended himſelf very well, it was but probable that he would have been deſtroyed at laſt. Without any heſitation, Rigby jumped off his horſe, and ran to his aſſiſtance: he ſeized the fellow's ſtick, who had not yet recovered from the blow that felled him; and attacking one of the two, who were ſtill ſtriking very furiouſly at this ſingle man, ſoon drew his attention another way. This unexpected aſſiſtance encreaſed the fury of the ruffians, and eſpecially him whom it was Rigby's lot to attack, who was the moſt deſperate of the three. As he was very ſtrong and bulky, he deſpiſed his adverſary, and thought ſoon to finiſh him: but he was much miſtaken; for Rigby was an excellent cudgel-player, and withal, ſo nimble and alert, that he ſoon convinced his antagoniſt he was, at leaſt, a match for him. In the mean time the other, who had been knocked down, recovered. And now the combat was renewed

with greater fury than ever: Rigby's ally ſtill keeping two of them in play, while he was endeavouring to diſable the third. Already had he given him three or four ſmart ſtrokes that made him feel the ſtick, but none ſufficiently powerful to bring him down: at length an opening preſented itſelf, and Rigby, collecting all his force, by one judicious blow, laid him bleeding and ſenſeleſs on the ground. He lent his ſpeedy aſſiſtance to the ſtranger, and, unperceived, knocked one of the others down: and the third truſted to his ſafety in a good pair of heels, which conveyed him, with great expedition, from the field of battle.

"Sir," ſaid Rigby, "we had better ſe-
"cure theſe fellows, now they are in our
"power."

"Let me aſk them a queſtion firſt," replied the ſtranger, with a great deal of compoſure. They were now riſen, and, from the treatment they had met with, very

little

little inclined to renew the engagement. "I will give you your liberty," ſaid he to them, "if you will anſwer me one queſtion "faithfully." They promiſed they would. "Did not Sir Andrew employ you to do "this?"

They declared he had.

"Then fly," ſaid he, "and tell him "this is the third time: and now let *him* "take care."

They did not wait a ſecond bidding, but ſtruck into a path that led acroſs the wood, and vaniſhed in a hurry.

"Young gentleman," ſaid the ſtranger, with much calmneſs and deliberation, "your "behaviour has been very generous and "gallant. I thank you for it; but don't "let me hinder you in your journey. I am "going to the next town to dinner, and if "you are going that way, I'll accompany "you; it is but two miles diſtant."

Rigby agreed, and taking the bridle of his horſe in his hand, they walked on toge-

ther. And now he had an opportunity to obſerve his fellow-traveller: he ſeemed about thirty, though he was really younger: he was tall and well-built; was active and reſolute, and from what Rigby could obſerve, he was as indifferent and calm when attacked, as when he was not. His face was tolerably good: but there was a ferocity and ſternneſs in his countenance that gave him an appearance of horror. His features aſſumed an inflexible ſeverity: and an eternal frown, that ſettled on his brow, added to the extraordinary effect which his eyes, ſparkling with uncommon vivacity and wildneſs, had upon the beholder.

Rigby entered into converſation with him, and could not help aſking him about the cauſe of his being thus aſſaulted, which he ſeemed very well acquainted with.

The ſtranger replied, he knew the reaſon very well, and had been uſed in that manner twice before, but he would ſoon turn the tables. As he ſeemed to avoid being

particular,

particular, Rigby declined aſking him any more queſtions: he therefore changed the ſubject, and they chatted very freely together on indifferent topicks; and Mr. Hillaſton, for that was the ſtranger's name, ſhewed that he had read much in his time: but there was a ſingularity in his manner of thinking, and expreſſing thoſe thoughts, that both pleaſed and ſurpriſed our traveller. They ſoon arrived at the town where they propoſed dining, and accordingly ſat down to a comfortable repaſt. Hillaſton had learn'd from Rigby where he was going, and his deſign of taking orders: he therefore aſſured him he would call and ſee him at Cambridge before it was long. Rigby alſo told him that he ſhould be very glad to ſee him: they drank their pint of wine, and parted with mutual promiſes of regard, and a deſire to meet again.

As Rigby proceeded, he could not help acknowledging to himſelf a curioſity to know the cauſe of the profound melancholy

that affected his new acquaintance. He obſerved him to ſigh very frequently: and never could he perceive that his features were relaxed into a ſmile. His calmneſs and indifference ſeemed rather the conſequence of deſpair, than that determined and immoveable reſolution, which is true heroiſm; he therefore hoped he would be as good as his word, and pay him a viſit at Cambridge, where he arrived that night, that he might learn the cauſe of ſuch extraordinary conduct.

In about two months he came, according to promiſe, and Rigby expreſſed much ſatisfaction at ſeeing him.

"How did you come, Mr. Hillaſton?

"On foot; this ſtaff is the only horſe "that I make uſe of; and in this manner "I travel all through England—I am ſel-"dom at home."

"That muſt be very pleaſant—"

"Yes," ſaid he, "to thoſe who can en-"joy it; but I always go alone."

In

In this viſit he opened ſomewhat of his character to Rigby, who found him a man poſſeſſed of the nobleſt and moſt generous ſentiments. But ſome accident had embittered the happineſs of his days, had caſt a gloom over his countenance, and induced a ſeverity in his manners that ſeemed foreign to him, and was diſagreeable to every body elſe. Nothing could alter his behaviour: and he appeared, from ſome flightineſſes, to be actually diſordered in his mind.

He informed Rigby, that he had an eſtate of between four and five hundred a year on the borders of that county; but, of all places on earth, there was none where there was leſs probability of finding him than at home. Rigby remarked, when he left him to himſelf, that he was tolerably communicative, but always waved anſwering any queſtions. He therefore ſeemed to be pleaſed with Rigby's conduct in that particular.

On the third day of his ſtay with him, as ſome talk led him to that ſubject, he aſked him if he was married? Hillaſton ſtarted at the ſound, looked very attentively at him for a ſmall time, and ſtretched out his hand, as a token of amity to him.

"Now," ſaid he, "I muſt bid you fare-"well; but I will come and ſee you ſoon "again."

Without waiting for a reply, he went away, fetching a deep ſigh, that was heard very plainly. This conduct corroborated Rigby's ſuſpicions of his inſanity: and he concluded him to be ſome unhappy man croſſed in love; and that his aſking that queſtion ſo *mal a propos* had a bad effect on him: for this reaſon, he determined never to make another enquiry concerning his affairs, when it only ſerved to render him outrageous.

He did not remain long abſent from Rigby. He ſpent a day with him, and uſed

uſed to viſit him frequently between that time and the ſeaſon in which he had appointed to return to Berkſhire. Still no alteration or difference could be perceived, either in his face or manner, ſave that he was ſometimes more flighty and abſtracted than at others, and that he indicated great and frequent tokens of friendſhip and affection for Rigby; who pitied his diſtraction, and began to like the man. He propoſed, as ſome relief to him, to accompany him into Berkſhire; and Hillaſton very willingly conſented.

As they were talking of their intended journey, and the conveyance they ſhould make uſe of, Hillaſton propoſed to walk it; — "for," ſaid he, "that is my uſual "method of travelling; and, I aſſure you, "it is very entertaining."

"I do not in the leaſt doubt it," replied Rigby; "but there is one inconvenience "attending it, which I do not know how

"to remedy, or I ſhould like ſuch a ſcheme "very well.—What ſhall we do for linen?"

"That will not prevent us; I have ſeve- "ral houſes on the road, where I leave "my ſhirts, and we ſhall contrive to do "very well. I have ſhirts and ſtockings "in the moſt diſtant parts of England. "I have an incredible number of them; "and, as I leave them in different places, "I have no occaſion to load myſelf with "the carriage of them."

Rigby confeſſed the juſtice of the obſervation; and, when the time came, they ſet off together, having ſent their cloaths and other things to London, to be forwarded for them to the place of their deſtination.

Rigby expected much pleaſure from this journey, as well from the novelty of it, as the ſingular character of his companion, whom he looked upon as mad, though not miſchievouſly ſo. His total indifference to every external object made him conclude his mind was intenſely fixed upon ſome-

thing

thing which he could not even gueſs at, and which he ſuppoſed to be the cauſe of his diſtraction. He ſeemed equally unmoved by pleaſure or pain; yet he talked very frequently in the moſt ſenſible and feeling manner; and his ſentiments beſpoke nice and uncommon notions of honour and juſtice: and, indeed, to confeſs the truth, Rigby did not like him a bit the worſe for entertaining ſuch, though they bordered a little upon the romantic, and were very foreign to the habits and cuſtoms of the modern world. Hillaſton, in calculating the places where he had left his ſhirts, that they might be regularly ſupplied with linnen, was obliged to lead his companion a little out of the way; but as they had time enough upon their hands, that circumſtance was very immaterial. Agreeable chat beguiled the way, and Rigby conceived a very pleaſing idea of their future journey.

They had dined with great ſatisfaction, their frugal repaſt being rendered delicious to them by a good appetite, and they ſet out for the place which they purpoſed ſleeping at that night, about twelve miles diſtant. Their road lay acroſs a little but deep river, which being ſome time before much ſwoln with mountain-floods, had waſhed away part of the bridge, and the inhabitants had erected a wooden one to preſerve the communication for horſes and foot paſſengers only. Juſt as our travellers arrived at this bridge, a young lad, decently dreſſed, on horſe-back, was coming towards them; but being mounted on a young ſkittiſh horſe, he was ſo much terrified at the ſound his feet made on the boards of the bridge, that he began to rear and plunge with great fury. His rider could neither get him backwards or forwards: and giving him the whip and ſpur too freely, the beaſt made one furious effort, and threw this unfortunate young

young man fairly over the rails of the bridge, which were very low. Our travellers could afford him no aſſiſtance whilſt he maintained the ſtruggle with his horſe; but as ſoon as Hillaſton ſaw the accident, he droped his ſtaff in the road, and with as much compoſure as if he was going to ſtep into a carriage, ſlipped off his coat and waiſtcoat, and threw himſelf over the bridge after him. The horſe, terrified at the noiſe of his jumping into the water, ſtood ſtock ſtill: Rigby immediately ſeized and ſecured him by the bridle; then jumping over the ditch, ran along the ſide of the river to be ready to aſſiſt his friend. Hillaſton obſerved the ſpot where the young man was thrown: and being an expert ſwimmer he ſeized him as he roſe ſenſeleſs with the fright and the fall, and ſupported him till he got to land where Rigby ſtood. They rolled him about, and holding him by his heels made him diſgorge the water he had ſwallowed; and in a little

a little time reſtored him to life. When he came to be informed of the generoſity of his deliverer, he was unbounded in his thanks and acknowledgements; and acquainting our friend that his father was a farmer at a ſmall diſtance, entreated him to go home along with him that he might get dry cloaths. This he refuſed very ſtrongly. They helped him on his horſe, which they led over the bridge, as he ſaid he muſt return home after that accident, and renewed his entreaties to the gentlemen to go with him.

"Boy," ſaid Hillaſton, with an unuſual ſeverity of aſpect, "go home, and be "thankful for this eſcape; perhaps, it "had been better for thee if thou hadſt "not been ſaved, you would have expe-"rienced leſs miſery—Now leave us."

The boy expreſſed his ſorrow at his refuſal; and repeating his thanks, rode off as faſt as he could. Rigby inſiſted on carrying his companion's coat and waiſtcoat till his

ſhirt

ſhirt dried at leaſt. The other oppoſed it, but was at laſt obliged to ſubmit to his friend. They walked on at a good round pace to prevent cold having any effect: and Rigby could not help remarking to himſelf, that he had obſerved no change in the viſage of his companion either when he ſaw the young lad thrown into the river, when he ruſhed in to ſave him, or when he had recovered him to life. This increaſed his ſurprize, and deſire to develope his character.

When they had proceeded about five miles in this manner, they perceived the lad whom they had relieved, and an elderly, well-looking man, whom they ſuppoſed to be his father, ſtanding in the road, and near them a ſervant, holding three horſes. As they approached them, the father ran towards Hillaſton, yet in his ſhirt, and throwing his arms around him, claſped him to his boſom.—"Ex-"cuſe my tranſports, Sir," ſaid the old man,

man, (the big tears dropping from his eyes) "you have ſaved my life in my "child's—you have ſaved his mother's too. "Deprived of our only remaining com- "fort, we ſhould have ſpent the remainder "of our days in miſery: But you are our "deliverer. Come then, I beſeech you, "come, with your friend, and receive the "thanks of the poor mother, who longs "to ſee the ſaviour of her child. Come, "and let us have your company for one "night at leaſt."

When he had done ſpeaking, Hillaſton ſurveyed him very attentively for about half a minute; then replied, in a deliberate and ſtern voice—"Friend, thou "haſt got thy ſon—be contented—thank "not me—but thank the Omnipotent, that "ſent me in a way to relieve him, and "gave me the diſpoſition to do it. Now "return to your houſe, and be joyful with "your friends. I delight not in mirth.—"Farewell."

He

He puſhed the old man gently aſide, and ſtrode off with great celerity; leaving the boy and his father equally aſtoniſhed at his generoſity and moroſeneſs. Rigby, who was alſo much ſurprized, told them, that he was ſorry he could not partake of their happineſs for their reſtored child, but was obliged to follow his companion. They wiſhed him a good walk, and he haſtened after his companion as faſt as he could. He did not come within ſight of him for a long time; at laſt, he perceived him ſitting by the ſide of the road, at the foot of a hill. As Rigby approached him he ſtarted up, and thanking him for the trouble he had taken in carrying his cloaths, put them on; and they proceeded together very ſociably, as he forbore to aſk him any queſtions about his behaviour, till they reached the town of ——, and, at the ſign of the Sun, took up their quarters for the enſuing night.

Rigby

Rigby ſoon perceived that Hillaſton was no ſtranger in the houſe. They paid him all the reſpect and attention imaginable. Every thing he deſired was done immediately; and, in preference to any other perſon's commands, his were obeyed. However, he thought the landlord and his wife looked very ſtrangely on them, and what it was owing to he knew not. While their ſupper was preparing, Hillaſton aſked concerning their beds: and Rigby obſerved, that a room with two beds in it would ſerve them. But he ſaw with ſurprize the landlord, who, from his ſize, and the volubility of his tongue, ſuppoſed himſelf a very ſenſible and important fellow, nodding and frowning at him very ſignificantly; and then, looking at his wife, ſaid, they had no ſuch room empty, but they had ſingle-bedded rooms enough.

"Well, that will do very well," replied Hillaſton.

Mine

Mine hoſt, ſeeing Rigby amazed at this behaviour, gave him a ſly beckon, and going out, was followed by him.

"Lord bleſs me! Sir," ſaid the landlord, "do you know who you have got with "you?"

"Not very well," replied Rigby.

"Aye, I thought ſo, by your aſking "for a two-bedded room.—Why, he'd "have cut your throat in the night.— "But perhaps he is coming," added he, looking very cautiouſly about—"Do you "come down when he is in bed, and my "miſtreſs and I will tell you more of him. "—You ſeem a good-natured, civil gem- "man, and—but mum's the word," ſaid he, clapping the fore-finger of his right-hand to his noſe—"you ſhall know all— "that's enough—Remember."

Rigby promiſed he would, and returned to his companion.

Though he had no great opinion of his landlord's wiſdom, yet, as he was longer acquainted

quainted with Hillaſton than himſelf, he might learn ſome information from him, that would lead to the diſcovery he wanted to make. He therefore waited with ſome impatience, till it was time to retire to reſt; and the more eſpecially as Hillaſton was remarkably grave and ſilent all the evening. It came at laſt: and taking candles, they each repaired to their reſpective apartments. Rigby ſoon returned to the room where he had left the landlord waiting for him.

"Well, Sir," ſays mine hoſt of the Sun, "you have diſpoſed of that mad gem-"man — that's very well; for I believe "he's a dangerous man."

"Aye—I hope not."

"Yes, that he is, as I'll tell you.—You "muſt know that—But ſorrow's very dry, "maſter; ſuppoſe we had a drop of warm "punch; my miſtreſs has as good a finger "at punch-making as any ſhe in the hun-"dred."

"Let

"Let ſome be made," ſaid Rigby, "by "all means."

"Here, miſtreſs, make half a crown's "worth of punch, let it be righteous, d'ye "hear, half and half, hot; and bring it "in yourſelf."

"And pray, landlord, how long is it ſince "you have known this gentleman."

"Three years next Lammas—Lammas "—No, Martlemas I mean—And he has "been here twenty times ſince, I dare ſay: "and would you believe it, I never once "ſaw him laugh or even ſmile, though I "have ſtrove to make him do it.—No, "maſter, no, he's melancholy mad: but "he does a deal miſchief to ſome folks, "though in the main he's harmleſs enough. "We've a parcel of ſhirts of his in the "houſe, and ſo as he goes by, he calls "in and takes one and leaves another."

Here the communicative hoſt was interrupted by the entrance of his wife with the bowl of punch; which her huſband having

having taſted, and declared his approbation of, ſhe drew her chair to the table, and the converſation was renewed.

"And what miſchief has he done that "you know of?"

"Oh, a mortal deal," replied the hoſteſs: "the people hereabouts are deadly afraid "of him, for they ſay he has ſeen a ghoſt, "and that it follows him."

"Hold your fooliſh chatter. I'll tell you "maſter. Here's your health—To be ſure "thof' he be mad, he always behaves very "civilly here, and pays his money like a "gemman, and what's every body's buſi- "neſs is no body's buſineſs, as the ſaying "is.—But about the miſchief—Oh—Why "you muſt know Sir, that about a ſmall "mile out of this town, is 'Squire Cock- "ſedge's eſtate, good nine hundred a year "as ever crow flew over: and the living "is worth two more; and a very worthy "gemman had it to be ſure, that was this "young 'Squire's father's tutor, and ſo he

"gave

" gave him the living—Well this gemman
" had one daughter, about ſixteen years old
" when he died: and a ſweet pretty crea-
" ture ſhe was, as ever the ſun ſhone upon
" —and the young 'Squire was very fond of
" her, as the talk went. This parſon died
" about three years agone, and he had
" purchaſed a little bit of an eſtate, about
" fifty or ſixty pounds a year, where the
" widow and her daughter lived: ſo the
" young 'Squire had been very thick at the
" parſon's when he was alive, and he uſed
" to go and ſee them after his death; and
" as the ſtory goes, he got her belly up:
" to be ſure he's as likely a young fellow
" as you would ſee in a thouſand; a liſ-
" ſome, tight, clean made youth, to be
" ſure: it was only a report d'ye ſee, for
" I can't or wou'dn't ſay ſo for my right
" hand: becauſe why? both the 'Squire
" and his Lady uſe the houſe now. So,
" ſoon after, the old 'Squire died, and as
" he was the only child he got all; and

" then

" then it ſeems he wou'dn't marry the par-
" ſon's daughter—for why ſhould he? you
" know—becauſe ſhe had no fortune; and
" a crack'd pitcher, you know, eh—" ſaid he, with a horſe-laugh.

" That's the reaſon he oft," replied the wife.

" You're a fool," ſaid he, " and don't
" know nothing—So the poor girl, it ſeems,
" took on piteouſly, and did nothing but
" cry: and the people thought as how ſhe
" wou'd break her heart, as the ſtory goes
" —This was about a year and a half ago:
" and about that time too, this mad gem-
" man came down here in his walks, for
" I never ſaw him with a horſe in my life—
" So he heard of this affair ſome how or
" other, by hook or by crook, and it
" ſeems he went to the widow's, and ſpoke
" to the women folk: and then he went
" to the 'Squire's, and there it ſeems, as
" John the footman told me, they talked
" together for a great while, the 'Squire

" and

" and he—and ſometimes were very loud:
" and at laſt they came to blows: and our
" madman thraſhed the 'Squire very ſound-
" ly, and then he helped him up to bed,
" but he wou'dn't let the ſervants touch
" 'un, for as John ſaid, there was enough
" o' them to have broke every bone in his
" body: ſo then he came that night, and
" ſlept here, and next day he went again
" to the 'Squire's; and ſo he went back-
" wards and forwards, and to the great
" aſtoniſhment of every body the next Sun-
" day they were married together—To be
" ſure ſhe's a main good woman, and every
" body loves her, for ſhe's very good to
" the poor—And ſo this mad gemman
" wou'dn't go and ſtay with them, though
" they wou'd have given him gold if he
" cou'd eat it—and they uſed to leave
" word with me to tell him when he came
" here, that they wanted to ſee him: and I
" uſed to tell him, and he never wou'd go:

" and at laſt threaten'd me that he wou'd
" lick me, if I ever told him again of it—
" I ſhou'dn't be affear'd o' that, for I am
" as good a man as he, if ſo be he was
" not mad:—So here's t'ye maſter?"

" And do you call this doing miſchief?"

" To be ſure: for its bad enough to
" marry where one has an inclination, not
" where one has not, and without any
" money too."

And now mine hoſt, who knew nothing of Hillaſton, but as a mad man and a traveller who frequented his houſe, began to think himſelf entitled to aſk Rigby his opinion of him, and how long he had known him: but all theſe queſtions were anſwered, very little to the ſatisfaction of the inquiſitive landlord, who told ſome other ſtories of the freaks of Mr. Hillaſton, which confirmed Rigby in his good opinion of the man whoſe brain was diſtracted, and who did, and wiſhed to do good, though his

his manner of doing it was very extraordinary. It then occured to him to aſk his hoſt, what reaſon he had for ſaying that his companion would cut his throat?

The other replied, that he looked upon him as very mad, and that as he was the only perſon that ever he had ſeen with him, he did not know but he was acquainted with him. But he diſguiſed the truth, which was he thought to pick out from Rigby ſome account of his companion: but that he found was impoſſible They therefore parted mutually diſatisfied, though Rigby was much better pleaſed than the landlord: who declared it as his opinion to his wife, that he believed that young man was little better than a fool; for if *he* had travelled with him ſo long, he would have known every thing about him.

Rigby was not a little diverted the next morning, when he and his friend were preparing for their departure, to ſee the diligence and attention of the landlord and his

wife; which Rigby imputed to the right cauſe, fear: for mine hoſt did not like to encounter a mad man; and ſeemed to be very happy when they left the houſe, wiſhing them a good journey, with great politeneſs and good humour. The ſecond day's journey was not interrupted by any accident; but in every houſe where Hillaſton was known, Rigby perceived that they all joined in an opinion of his inſanity. He was very agreeably entertained by his companion, whoſe ſingular remarks had much variety in them, and ſhewed a ſtrong judgment and good underſtanding, mixed with a great knowledge of men and things. He found he had been abroad: for theſe matters were all ſpontaneouſly communicated to him; and his want of curioſity ſeemed to pleaſe Hillaſton much; who related ſeveral little adventures of his to Rigby, and gave him accounts of thoſe places at which he had been abroad; making

ing judicious and amuſing compariſons between them and the country he was then in. Rigby found him an entertaining and inſtructive companion; and he liked Rigby's prudence and good nature, that ſuffered him to purſue his own fancy without interruption.

On the evening of the ſixth day they arrived at Mr. Wilkins's; and, as the family had been taught to expect a friend whom Rigby was to bring along with him, every thing was prepared to receive them with the warmeſt welcome. People in general adapt their behaviour to ſtrangers, from the impreſſion their countenance has on them. With thoſe who look like good-humoured perſons, they are free and unreſerved: But the gloom and ſeverity ſo viſible on Hillaſton's brow caſt a damp over the ſpirits of the whole family; and Rigby perceived it with concern. Taking Wilkins aſide, he told him, he believed

his gueſt was a little diſordered in his mind; but that he was a very well diſpoſed and benevolent kind of man; that it would make him very unhappy, if he took any notice of him, but let him purſue his own way; and that the family ſhould juſt behave as if he was not there. The ſame leſſon he gave to his mother and Mrs. Wilkins, who ſoon reſumed their former behaviour: and Hillaſton, finding he was not particularly obſerved, began to unbend himſelf a little, and became in ſome meaſure agreeable to the women, notwithſtanding his forbidding countenance.

Rigby, ſoon after his arrival, went to pay his compliments to Mrs. Wilcox. It was near nine months ſince ſhe had ſeen him before; and ſhe welcomed him in a manner that beſpoke her regard for him. With her was Miſs Bennet, whoſe good opinion of her couſin, from the time ſhe firſt ſaw her, had ripened into a ſincere and laſting friend-

friendſhip. At the ſight of Rigby, ſhe could ſcarcely conceal her emotions. The heart unuſed to falſhood and deception, cannot diſguiſe its feelings; and even when an attempt is made to do ſo, the veil is ſo thin, that it is eaſily ſeen through. Her perturbation, at the unexpected ſight of the man whom ſhe had ſo frequently thought and talked of in his abſence, threw her into great agitations. But they were entirely unobſerved by him who cauſed them: for he had no notion that every woman who ſaw him muſt neceſſarily and abſolutely be in love with him. Mrs. Wilcox inſiſted upon her viſitor's ſtaying to dinner: he complied; and ſoon after, Mr. Wilcox returned home from his uncle's, where he had been that day. He expreſſed great pleaſure at ſeeing Rigby; and welcomed him very heartily to the country again: aſſured him, that he was happier

now

now than ever: and to his reſolution he was indebted for it. "And you ſee, Rig-"by," ſaid he, "we ſhall have an increaſe "in our family ſoon;" pointing to his wife, who began to ſhew very round about the waiſt.

"May it increaſe your happineſs too," ſaid Rigby.

"I have no doubt of it," returned Wilcox; "and my worthy uncle's generoſity "has placed it on a permanent footing.

"But we ſhall have another wedding "ſoon. Our couſin Lydia will be lady "Crawford in a few days."

"I aſſure you, Mr. Wilcox," replied Miſs Bennet, aſſuming more ſpirit than uſual upon this occaſion, "that your intelligence wants confirmation."

As ſhe ſpoke, a bluſh covered her face. Wilcox laughed loudly at her pretended delicacy; and his wife wore a very ſignificant

cant ſmile. Rigby, who was not in the ſecret, wiſhed her every happineſs that the nuptial ſtate could afford her, whenever ſhe entered into it. This addreſs only ſerved to pique her the more; and ſhe replied, that ſhe was much obliged to him for his good wiſhes.

When Wilcox and his wife preſſed Rigby to come and ſee them frequently, he informed them of his having a companion with him in the country, whom he had brought from Cambridge. They deſired that might be no prevention; for they ſhould be very glad to ſee any friend of his. He thanked them, and departed.

He was received in the moſt friendly manner alſo at Mr. Bennet's, to whom he introduced Hillaſton; and ſoon after took him to Mr. Wilcox's. As he had prepared the way for his reception, his ſilence and

ſingularity were not ſo much obſerved; and having nothing to provoke his ſpleen or reſentment, he became a ſociable creature; and, though not ſo agreeable as the ladies could wiſh, yet he was not intolerable.

The END of VOL. I.

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